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OVERLAND KIT.



Kit slackened the pace of his horse a little on the crest of the hill, turned his head and looked back, as if to laugh in defiance at his pursuers.

OVERLAND KIT; OR, THE IDYL OF WHITE PINE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

Author of "Witches of New York," "Wolf Demon," "White Witch," etc.

CHAPTER I. THE ROAD-AGENTS.

Just as the full, round moon rose above the rocky peaks that hemmed in the Reese river, and cast her broad, bright beam down upon the little road that ran by the side of the stream, bathing hill, valley and rolling water in a flood of silvery light, the overland coach from Austen, bound for Lone, rolled up to Kennedy's Rancho.

The driver descended from the box, bawled out "supper," and the passengers commenced to alight from the coach.

Down from the box, from his seat by the driver's side, came a stout, muscular Irishman, upon whose honest and good-humored face was a broad grin, caused by the pleasant announcement of the dinner. He was called Patsey Doolin. From the interior of the Concord coach came a portly man, with a grave, staid face, lit up by large gray eyes and fringed by iron-gray hair.

The driver descended from the box, bawled out "supper," and the passengers commenced to alight from the coach.

Kennedy, the proprietor of the Rancho, greeted the Judge—every one called the merchant "Judge," although the only reason for the title was his grave and stately manner—with great respect.

After the Judge, came an elderly, white-haired man, with a fat, unctuous face, wherein twinkled two sharp little blue eyes. In form he was portly and commanding. An air of intense respectability sat upon him. He was evidently a man well to do in the world and one who fully understood what good living meant. This well-preserved old gentleman was from New York city, and was known as Salmon Rennet—by profession a lawyer, and reputed to be one of the keenest in all Gotham.

After descending to the ground, the old lawyer turned to the coach and gallantly assisted a lady out.

A young and beautiful girl, some two and twenty years of age. In figure, she was tall and straight, exquisitely proportioned, the rounded outlines of her form giving fair promise of a glorious womanhood. Her face oval; its complexion, the rich creamy hue of new milk and the blush of the crimson rose-leaf blended; eyes, dark-blue, rich and lustrous in their light;

her hair, the golden brown that seems to woo the sunbeams. She was called Bernice Gwyne. She was a wealthy heiress, orphaned, and the old lawyer acted as a sort of protector to her.

A few words will explain.

Twenty years before the time at which our story commences, two brothers were doing business together in New York—two men of Irish descent, Patrick and Daniel Gwyne. Daniel was the father of Bernice. He died while she was but an infant. Bernice was taken in charge by her uncle, Patrick, who reared her as carefully as if she had been his own child. Patrick Gwyne had but a single scion—a son, some ten years older than Bernice, named Patrick, after himself.

Patrick, the father, was a steady, sober man of business; Patrick, the son, was a wild, reckless youth, all the fire of the old Irish blood was in his veins and swayed all his actions.

Vainly his father remonstrated with him upon his wayward course.

The blow that the anxious sire expected, came at last. In a drunken quarrel, in a gaming-house, young Patrick Gwyne stabbed one of his companions to the heart.

The blow really was struck in self-defense, but the curse of Cain was upon the forehead of the reckless youth and he fled in haste from the city where he had first seen the light.

Hot pursuit was given, for the dead youth came of a wealthy family, who burned to avenge his death; but, in the Far West, amid the pine-clad sierras, where the golden mass lies deep hid in the rocky "pocket," and veins of silver streak the quartz, the fugitive found shelter and hid defiance to pursuit.

Time, that in its flight brings forgetfulness in its train, covered young Patrick Gwyne and his crime from sight with the dark waters of oblivion.

The stern father, like the Roman parent of ancient time, cursed the son who had dishonored his race. He forbade the mention of his name within the household. The grave and silent man strove, in Bernice's love, to forget that he had once had a son.

Six months before the time that our story

opens, old Patrick Gwyne died, leaving all his property to his niece, Bernice. The outcast son was not even mentioned in his will; though it was true that no one knew whether he was alive or dead, for, since the time of his flight from New York, ten years before, not a single word regarding him had ever been received.

Bernice waited until the estate was all settled up, and then coolly announced to Mr. Salmon Rennet—who, as the legal adviser of her deceased uncle, had charge of his affairs—that it was her intention to go to the Far West and discover whether her cousin, Patrick, was alive or dead, before she would touch one single penny of her uncle's money. Bernice had quite a little fortune of her own, inherited from her father.

The lawyer remonstrated, but in vain; the mind of the girl was fixed, and words could not turn her from her purpose.

She declared that she felt sure that her cousin was still living, and she would not touch the money that belonged by rights to him.

This determination puzzled the old lawyer greatly. He had little idea of the reason that impelled the girl to act as she did.

Bernice, the child of twelve years, had loved her cousin, the youth of twenty; loved him as a child, but, as she grew to womanhood, she kept his memory green in her heart. Every night before she closed her eyes in sleep, his handsome, manly face floated before her eyes.

This love it was, deep down in her heart, a perpetual well-spring of joy, that caused her to reject the suitors who had tried to win her smiles. It was this childish affection, strengthened by years into womanly love, which had brought her two thousand miles or more to seek the man who, for one wild act of passion, when the maddening fumes of liquor had fired his brain to frenzy, had been compelled to fly from civilized life and find a refuge amid the canons of the Far Western sierras, the haunts of the wolf, the red Indian, and the crime-stained white outcast.

At Bernice's urgent entreaty, the old lawyer had consented to accompany her on what he, not inaptly, termed a wild-geese chase.

The great silver discoveries had just been made in the White Pine region, as the old lawyer and the young girl set out on their mission. All California was rushing there, and, thinking if Patrick Gwyne lived, he might be attracted there too, the lawyer headed his course in that direction. There was also another motive: Rennet had a son who had been in business in San Francisco, failed there and had located at Spur City, the point to which the lawyer was now conducting Bernice.

The crafty and keen-witted old gentleman had formed a little scheme in which he needed his son's assistance.

Rennet had not the slightest hope of find-

ing any trace of the outcast, for whom Bernice was in search, but he had made up his mind to turn this western trip to serve his own purpose. What that was, our story will tell.

Judge Jones, the Irishman, Mr. Rennet and Bernice, were all the passengers that journeyed in the coach.

"Come, hurry up your cakes, old hoss!" cried the driver of the coach to Kennedy, the ranchman. The driver was called Ginger Bill, on account of his flowing red locks and beard.

In the mining districts few popular men but have some designation attached to their own proper name.

"Oh, I ain't got time to tarry. I ain't got time to wait, old hoss!"

Billy sung at the top of his voice, cracking his long whip in the air.

"What's your hurry?" asked Kennedy.

"Why, I want for to slap this coach inter Spur City afore twelve, you bet! I want to git a chance to shake a leg at the Eldorado afore I turn in."

"Rock back Davy cuttin' up a shine, Gal-with the red ha'r kickin' up ahind!"

"Supper 'll be ready in a minute. Didn't expect you so soon. You're ahead of time to-night."

"I'm jist old lightnin' now, furst thing you know! 'Sides, I wanted for to make here 'fore dark. The road 'tween here an' Jacobville ain't all hunky, arter sundown, since Overland Kit's taken to lookin' arter it." Billy said, significantly.

"Overland Kit? Who's he?" asked the lawyer, who was standing near by, with Bernice on his arm.

"Guess you're a stranger round hyer, ain't yer?" the driver asked.

"Yes, I am; but, who is this man?"

"I'll never tell yer, as we used for to say in old Kentuck; you're too much for me, stranger," Bill answered.

"You see, he's a road-agent," Kennedy added.

"Begorra! they need somebody to be after luckin' to the road. Divil such a mane way I ver see'd afore!" exclaimed the Irishman, in disgust. "I don't know whether I'm inside or out, anyway."

All laughed at the indignation of the Irishman.

"What is the meaning of the term road-agent?" asked the lawyer, who guessed at once that the name had some peculiar significance attached to it.

"Oh, they're a polite set of gents, who stop the overland coaches, an' in order that the poor hosses shan't have too much to draw, they kindly relieve the galoots inside of any gold-dust, silver bricks, or any valuables of that sort, that they may happen to have along with 'em," the driver explained.

"Robbers, in plainer words," Judge Jones said.

"Why the devil don't you fight the rap-

parees?" questioned Doolin.

"The company pays me for to drive the coach, not for to fight," replied Bill, coolly; "that's extra, and ain't included in the bargain."

"But this Overland Kit?"

"The leader of the most awful, cussed set of road-agents that I ever heered tell on," said Kennedy, the ranch-keeper.

"What is he like?" Rennet asked.

"A good-sized fellow with his face kivered with a black mask, and all on his face that ain't hid by the mask, a big black beard covers. He rides a big brown hoss with four white feet and a blaze in the forehead; thar ain't any thing on four legs in the shape of hossflesh in these parts that kin beat him. He drops onto the coach like a flash, goes through the passengers for all they're worth, an' then he's off ag'in, quicker'n a streak of greased lightnin'!"

"Supper!" howled one of the ranchmen, stopping the story.

All proceeded into the house to attack the eatables, but thoughts of the road-agents were in every mind.

CHAPTER II. THE SWOOP OF THE HAWK.

The meal was soon dispatched, and the passengers again assembled around the coach.

"Is there any danger of our meeting this Overland Kit between here and Spur City?" Rennet asked, just a little nervous at the thought.

"Not much; never heered tell on the critter the other side of the ranche, hyer. He's got a roost up in the rocks somewhar, 'tween hyer an' Jacobville, I s'pect, 'cos he always swoops down, hawk-like, about ten miles from hyer. Maybe you noticed whar the road runs through a big canon."

"Yes, I did," the lawyer said; "but I should think that the troops stationed in Austen would make quick work of this fellow and his band." Rennet had noticed, as he passed through Austen, that a company of United States cavalry was stationed there.

"They've got to catch him first, you know," Bill said, with a laugh, "an' thar ain't easy to do. He seems to smell out a soder jist as a cat smells out a mice. I've drove the coach over the road twice, filled with soderjers, expectin' thar he'd come down on the coach, an' then they'd go for him. But, he never put in an appearance any time. He's a kind of a generous sort up a cuss; he never troubles any miner with his little pile, but allers goes for the express company's plunder. I reckon they've sworn a heap at him. He went through you, Judge, one't, didn't he?"

"Yes," replied the merchant; "two thousand dollars' worth of gold-dust. It has always been a puzzle to me how he learned that I had that dust."

"Oh, he's sharp, he is!" chimed in the driver. "I reckon, though, the soldiers will take him into camp one on these days."

"Then, good-by, Sal, come ag'in, soon!"

"All aboard!"

The passengers clambered into the coach. Bill took a long pull at Kennedy's whisky-flask, climbed up to his seat, cracked his whip over the leaders' ears, and the coach rolled on.

The road winding round to the right, following the course of the stream, the ranch was soon lost to sight.

It was a glorious night. The bright beams of the moon made the way almost as light as by day. The swaying pines upon the hillside, nodding sleepily in the gentle breeze, filled the mountain air with their strange balsamic odor.

The conversation of the three in the coach turned upon the subject of the daring road-agent. Judge Jones gave a brief account of his exploits.

"There are three in the band," said the Judge; "they have only been operating on this road for about a month. The express company has offered a large reward for their capture, but, as yet, they have eluded all attempts to arrest them. It is evident to me that these fellows belong to a regularly organized band, having spies in the principal mining camps, for their information regarding the coaches that carry valuables, and those that do not, is wonderful. They seldom attack a coach unless it has valuable express matter in it. The company are already out about ten thousand dollars, and they are sparing no pains to catch the rogues; but, as the driver said, they seem to scent the presence of the soldiers. It is a wonder that we have not been attacked, for we have some express matter that is very valuable."

"Why, I understood that the valuable express matter came from the mines," Renet said.

"Gold and silver? Exactly; but the valuables we are carrying consist of Government notes for my bank," explained the Judge.

"It's a terrible risk to run," the old lawyer said, nervously.

"Yes, but, if these fellows had attacked us, it might have cost them dearly. As usual, though, I suppose they have smelt out the trap," replied the Judge, significantly. Hardly had he uttered the words, when the coach came to a sudden halt, that almost pitched the passengers out of their seats.

The Judge and the lawyer stuck their heads out of the coach windows, one on each side.

The coach had stopped in a narrow defile, partially shaded from the moonlight by the tall pines that grew on the sides of the ravine.

Some twenty paces up the road, just at the further entrance to the ravine, were three horsemen, ranged side by side, motionless as statues.

The flickering moonbeams, that stole through the branches of the pines, played in rays of silvery light upon the polished revolver-barrels which the three horsemen leveled at the coach.

"It's the road-agent!" exclaimed the Judge, withdrawing his head from the coach window as he spoke.

Bernice gave a little scream of fright. Almost at the same instant, the bright flash of ignited gunpowder broke upon the air by the side of the coach, and the sharp crack of a pistol rung out on the still night breeze.

The three in the coach looked at each other in astonishment, for the shot was fired close by them, and the smoke had floated in through the window.

"Hallo! what do you mean by that shot?" cried one of the masked men on horseback, advancing slowly toward the coach. His voice was harsh and commanding.

The full, black beard that came from under his mask, as well as the brown horse he rode, marked with four white feet and a bright blaze in the forehead, told that the speaker was the notorious road-agent, Overland Kit, in person.

"Durned if I know," replied Bill. "I suspect one of the weapons inside went off at half-cock. 'Twa'n't fired at you, anyway."

"Tell them to throw their weapons out on the road, or I'll put a bullet through you!" cried Overland Kit, sternly.

"Hold on your mule-team now! don't be in a hurry," answered Bill, his natural coolness never deserting him. Then he bent over and addressed the two in the stage.

"Gents, if you don't want to attend a first-class funeral to-morrow, jest throw your weapons out into the road."

"I am not armed," the Judge replied.

"Nor I," said Renet.

The next morning, the enterprising New Englander who had opened the "Eldorado" looked over the battle-field in dismay. He cleared away the remains of the chairs, and provided benches.

But, at the very next "discussion" that took place, every bottle and glass in the saloon went to smash.

The hotel-keeper retreated, a "busted man," as he laconically expressed it.

Two or three others essayed to show the Spur Cityites that they understood "how to keep a hotel," but the rampant spirit of the miners was too much for them.

The Eldorado went from bad to worse.

Then, suddenly, a change came over its fortunes. A new hand took the helm; not a paw of iron, but soft white fingers.

No longer was the Eldorado saloon selected as the battle-ground of opposing clans. Peace reigned within its walls. Even the rough oaths of the bearded miners were hushed into a low growl. If a stranger, ignorant of the rules that governed the hotel, and thinking that, as long as he paid his money, he had a right to do as he pleased, and make himself as disagreeable as possible, would yell out an offensive imprecation, some stalwart neighbor would take it upon himself to inform the stranger that he must behave better, or be speedily "histed" out.

Few men, after a glance around at the lowering faces, but had sense enough to obey the warning.

And what had wrought this wondrous change in the manners of the patrons of the saloon?—For the frequenters of the Eldorado now were the same men who had "busted" the former proprietors.

Look around the saloon! If you are quick at guessing, a glance will tell you.

It is just midnight. The place is full of men drinking and smoking; the inhabitants of Spur City do not retire early.

Every thing within the saloon is neat as wax. The floor is white—and the mud of Spur City can't be excelled—the whitewashed walls show no sign of dirt, except above a certain table, where the pride of Paddy's Flat—Yellow Jim—lined "Go-

pher's pet"—Dave Reed—in with a knot-hole on the wall, but missed him, owing to Dave's quickness in firing his derringer through his pocket without drawing it, and drilling a hole through Jim's elbow, thereby throwing his shot out of line. The mark of the stray bullet on the wall still remained, a touching remembrance of the old times, when the Eldorado was good for one free fight, at least, per night.

Over the little mirror that is flanked by the bottles on the shelf, a couple of pine branches are tastefully arranged. Pine branches also ornament the whitewashed walls, their dark, cool green a delightful contrast to the glaring white.

On each rude table a tumbler is placed, containing a little bunch of wild flowers, encircled by green sprays.

All gives evidence of woman's careful hand.

The secret is out! The magic power that had tamed the unruly miners, and that "run" the Eldorado successfully, was feminine witchery.

Behind the bar, serving her patrons, assisted by a grave-faced Chinaman, was the woman who kept the Eldorado.

A woman?

No, only a child; nothing more.

A girl, barely sixteen; slight and fragile in form, with a grave and earnest face; the form of a girl, the face of a woman. Great masses of red-gold hair that gleamed in the candlelight like winding threads of fire, clustered around her temples and hung in tangled masses down to her shoulders; clear gray eyes, large and full, looked out above the sun-kissed cheeks. The firmly compressed lips—that glowed with the carnation's hue, and were as soft and fresh as the rosebud kissed by the dew of the morning—shut over the little white teeth, and the peculiar lines about the mouth plainly revealed to one gifted with the art of reading nature in the face—that the girl had a will of her own, and a mind far beyond her years.

Ask one of the bearded miners her name and he will reply, "Jinnie."

"Jinnie what?"

"Why, 'Eldorado Jinnie.'"

Ten to one that he has forgotten her whole name; and yet it is hardly a year since old Tom Johnson—commonly known as drunken Tom Johnson, to distinguish him from another Tom Johnson, whose Spunk reputation was Big-nosed Smith—had fallen into the river and drowned in a foot of water. He had fallen on his face, wandering to his tent in the darkness, and was too much under the influence of liquor to turn over and make an effort for his life.

The miners made up a little purse for the orphan girl, whom drunken Tom Johnson had always taken good care of in his rough way, and three or four of them held a sort of a council to decide what they had better do with the "little gal," as they termed Jinnie. These few had been cronies of her father.

Jinnie was consulted in regard to the subject; she thanked them for their kindness, but said she had already decided what to do.

All Spur City was astonished when it was announced, a week after Johnson's death, that little Jinnie had leased the Eldorado saloon and was going to run it as a first-class hotel—first-class for Spur City.

The miners wisely debated where the money had come from, for drunken Tom Johnson never was known to save a cent.

But one thing was evident, Jinnie had plenty of money, for she opened the place in good style.

It was a great night for Spur City when Jinnie opened the Eldorado. Everybody attended for ten miles around.

When the crowd surged into the saloon, and ceased abating their astonishment at the change that the girlish brains had wrought, one of the foremost of the rough crowd was Dick Talbot—"Gentleman Dick," as he was called by some; "Injun Dick," as he was called by others. The first name given, because he wore "store-clothes," a white shirt, always clean—he was the only man in Spur City that could boast such a luxury—polished boots and kid gloves.

The second, because he was as cool as a bank of snow melting under the shadow of the place in a mountain canon, wily as a panther, cunning as a fox; a man who knew not what fear was, who never turned his back on a foe, or hesitated to back a friend in a fair fight; quick as lightning on the trigger, sly as a cat with a Bowie-knife; the best two-handed sparrer that ever set foot in the Reese river valley, and the finest poker-player that ever handled a deck of cards.

Therefore, a popular man in Spur City was "Injun Dick."

He told of the orphan girl, left alone and trying to make an honest living—that Spur City needed a hotel, and she could keep it—that the first man that kicked up a row in the Eldorado would have to meet him and would get wiped out, if he was able to do it. The remarks were brief and quite to the point; no bluster or bravado, but delivered with a coolness that was far more impressive than heat.

The Eldorado became a "fixed place." Of course at first there had been some little trouble; some few skirmishes; but Injun Dick first run the offending parties out of the saloon and then administered a scientific thrashing. The parties who received the aforesaid never needed a second warning.

So at the time of which we write, the Eldorado had run a year as a saloon, restaurant and hotel, under the supervision of Jinnie, assisted by the grave and quiet Chinese, Ah Ling, who attended to the cooking department.

The Eldorado was only waiting for the coach to come in to close up for the night.

Just as the clock, that was ticking on the bar, struck twelve, a man, who was dressed so differently from the other patrons of the room, that he looked like the inhabitant of another land, entered the saloon.

A single look at the muscular, well-knit figure, that just reached the medium height; the springy step that told of the wondrous power that dwelt within the muscles of the leg; the firm, well-shaped head, with its close-cut black hair, its pale features, dark blue eyes, drooping mustache and little pointed beard, that, German fashion, adorned the chin alone, the rest of the face being smoothly shaven, told that the new-comer was "Injun Dick."

Talbot seated himself at the table nearest to the bar, which happened to be unoccupied.

"Make me a hot whisky, Jinnie," he said, a peculiar look upon his pale features.

While the girl was preparing the drink, she watched his face narrowly. She saw that something was the matter with the

coolest head that had ever sat on man's shoulder.

Jinnie brought the steaming liquid, and placing it before Talbot, sat down upon the other side of the table.

"Make me another one, you heathen!" he said, addressing the Chinese.

"No do—allee same," replied Ah Ling, grinning in a friendly manner at Talbot. He had a high respect for Dick, who had once saved him from being ducked in the Reese by a party of rough miners.

"What's the matter, Dick?" the girl asked, anxiously; "you very seldom drink any thing."

"Jinnie, old times are coming back to me. I don't drink whisky generally, because my business needs a cool head and a clear head, drink interferes with both. But, just now I want to forget if I can. I'm out of sorts to-night."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you! I don't know myself! But, Jinnie, I feel as if something was going to happen to me. I've been up to Gopher Gully having a little game of poker, and, would you believe it, Jinnie, every hand I've had to night, I've held the queen of hearts—a heart-woman—as the fortune-tellers say."

"And what does that mean?"

"Why, that a heart-woman is going to cross my track, and almost every time, Jinnie, the ace of spades has been the next card to it. That means bad luck—death, perhaps. I ain't generally superstitious, but, something's made me awful nervous to-night."

"A heart-woman?" said Jinnie, thoughtfully; "what is a heart-woman like, Dick?"

"Why, a woman about the same size as yourself; blue eyes and brownish hair."

"It's strange that you should be nervous, Dick," the girl said, with a sidelong glance into his face.

"We all have our dull moments sometimes, my girl," he replied, a sad expression in his tone.

The Chinaman brought the liquor and placed it on the table.

"Muchie like—good heapee," he said, grinning, and then returned to his former position.

"I hope, Dick, that if any danger threatens you, it will come openly," Jinnie said, thoughtfully.

"Why so?" Talbot asked in surprise.

"So that I can help you meet it, and so pay off a little of the debt I owe you," she said, low and earnestly.

"You owe me?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes. Oh! you mustn't think that I forget."

"You must think that I have got a bad memory," he said, quickly. "Do you think that I've forgotten when the Reese was coming down like a hungry panther and a helpless man was struggling in the icy waters, how somebody dashed into it, spite of the junks of ice and tree-trunks, and risked her life to save mine? When I forget that, Jinnie, just conclude that Injun Dick has passed in his checks, and will 'chip in' again nary a time."

A warm blush overspread the features of the girl's face as he spoke. A sweet feeling of joy filled all her young heart.

No, Jinnie, I never yet forgot a friend or a foe. I've always tried to pay my debts. But, it's strange, this queer feeling that has come over me. I believe in luck, and a little in presentiments; and, just now, I feel shaky about what's ahead."

He raised the glass to his lips; just then the door opened and Ginger Bill conducted Mr. Renet and Bernice into the saloon.

A convulsive gasp came from Talbot's lips, and the glass dropped from his nerveless hand to the floor, where it was shattered into a dozen pieces.

"The heart-woman!" he murmured, as he caught sight of Bernice's face.

(To be continued.)

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"What's the matter, Dick?" the girl asked, anxiously; "you very seldom drink any thing."

"Jinnie, old times are coming back to me. I don't drink whisky generally, because my business needs a cool head and a clear head, drink interferes with both. But, just now I want to forget if I can. I'm out of sorts to-night."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you! I don't know myself! But, Jinnie, I feel as if something was going to happen to me. I've been up to Gopher Gully having a little game of poker, and, would you believe it, Jinnie, every hand I've had to night, I've held the queen of hearts—a heart-woman—as the fortune-tellers say."

"And what does that mean?"

"Why, that a heart-woman is going to cross my track, and almost every time, Jinnie, the ace of spades has been the next card to it. That means bad luck—death, perhaps. I ain't generally superstitious, but, something's made me awful nervous to-night."

"A heart-woman?" said Jinnie, thoughtfully; "what is a heart-woman like, Dick?"

"Why, a woman about the same size as yourself; blue eyes and brownish hair."

"It's strange that you should be nervous, Dick," the girl said, with a sidelong glance into his face.

"We all have our dull moments sometimes, my girl," he replied, a sad expression in his tone.

The Chinaman brought the liquor and placed it on the table.

"Muchie like—good heapee," he said, grinning, and then returned to his former position.

"I hope, Dick, that if any danger threatens you, it will come openly," Jinnie said, thoughtfully.

"Why so?" Talbot asked in surprise.

"So that I can help you meet it, and so pay off a little of the debt I owe you," she said, low and earnestly.

"You owe me?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

"Yes. Oh! you mustn't think that I forget."

"You must think that I have got a bad memory," he said, quickly. "Do you think that I've forgotten when the Reese was coming down like a hungry panther and a helpless man was struggling in the icy waters, how somebody dashed into it, spite of the junks of ice and tree-trunks, and risked her life to save mine? When I forget that, Jinnie, just conclude that Injun Dick has passed in his checks, and will 'chip in' again nary a time."

A warm blush overspread the features of the girl's face as he spoke. A sweet feeling of joy filled all her young heart.

No, Jinnie, I never yet forgot a friend or a foe. I've always tried to pay my debts. But, it's strange, this queer feeling that has come over me. I believe in luck, and a little in presentiments; and, just now, I feel shaky about what's ahead."

He raised the glass to his lips; just then the door opened and Ginger Bill conducted Mr. Renet and Bernice into the saloon.

A convulsive gasp came from Talbot's lips, and the glass dropped from his nerveless hand to the floor, where it was shattered into a dozen pieces.

"The heart-woman!" he murmured, as he caught sight of Bernice's face.

(To be continued.)

Jinnie brought the steaming liquid, and placing it before Talbot, sat down upon the other side of the table.

"Make me another one, you heathen!" he said, addressing the Chinese.

"No do—allee same," replied Ah Ling, grinning in a friendly manner at Talbot. He had a high respect for Dick, who had once saved him from being ducked in the Reese by a party of rough miners.

"What's the matter, Dick?" the girl asked, anxiously; "you very seldom drink any thing."

"Jinnie, old times are coming back to me. I don't drink whisky generally, because my business needs a cool head and a clear head, drink interferes with both. But, just now I want to forget if I can. I'm out of sorts to-night."

"I presume I have the honor of addressing Mr. Obadiah Olkoff?" the colonel said, not in the least abashed by his cool reception.

"Yes, sir, that is my name," Olkoff replied, shortly.

"It gives me great pleasure, sir, to meet with a gentleman as distinguished in the annals of trade as yourself."

Olkoff gave vent to a dry cough. From the style of the stranger's speech he anticipated an attack upon his pocket-book.

"Allow me to introduce myself," continued the colonel, with a graceful wave of his hand; "I am Colonel Roland Peyton of Virginia, though at present residing in New York."

"I beg your pardon, sir," Olkoff said, coldly; "but if you have business with me, I must trouble you to proceed to it at once."

"Ex-actly," replied the colonel, with another flourish. "I see, my dear sir, you still retain the habits of a man of business, although I believe that you have long since retired from the busy haunts of trade."

"Will you have the goodness, sir, to explain your business without further prefix?" exclaimed the old man, impatiently.

"Of course," cried the colonel, in his oily way. "I trust that you will not think for a moment that I desire to infringe one little second longer on your valuable time than is absolutely necessary to explain my business. I trust you will excuse me if I take a chair?"

Olkoff nodded. He did not think it worth his while to waste words on the man who he felt convinced was some adventurer on a begging errand.

"Thank you," said the colonel, very politely. Then taking a chair, he drew it up near to Olkoff and sat down in it. Once seated, the colonel cast a suspicious glance around him. Olkoff opened his eyes in astonishment at the strange manner of the other.

"I suppose, sir, that our interview will be strictly private?" the colonel said, in a tone of question.

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded the merchant, a little annoyed at the words of the other.

"Walls have ears, you know—the old saying," replied the colonel, mysteriously. "Those doors, for instance, lead to a back parlor, I suppose?"

"Well, sir, what if they do?" cried Olkoff, sharply.

"Oh, nothing," replied the colonel, carelessly; "only if any of your servants or any other members of your household should happen to be in that room, and here the colonel's manner became very mysterious again, 'they might be able to overhear our conversation.'"

"It is not likely, sir, that any one in this house will condescend to play the part of an eavesdropper upon us; but, even if some one by accident should overhear what we have to say, I can not see what difference it would make," Olkoff's manner was far from being amiable.

in masses. If you don't know the history of this young girl, I propose to relate it to you.

"You know it?" cried Olkoff, in wonder. "Oh, yes," replied the colonel, in his usual cool way. "A man who travels round the world, and keeps his eyes open, sees many strange things. I understand that you intend to adopt this girl."

"Who told you that?" demanded Olkoff, gruffly.

"Suppose, now, I should reply as you did, but a moment ago, and say that I decline to answer your question?" asked the adventurer, with a sarcastic smile.

"Enough, sir; you need not reply!" cried Olkoff. "But, you have been rightly informed, sir; I do intend to adopt the girl."

"Man proposes, fate disposes," said the colonel, with a smile full of meaning.

"What do you mean, sir?" Olkoff's anger was again rising.

"Just what I said. You propose to adopt this girl known as Lillian; fate disposes that you shall not do any thing of the sort."

Olkoff began to believe that he was talking with a madman.

"I tell you again, sir, that I intend to adopt the girl!" he said, angrily.

"And I tell you, that, if a certain person objects, you won't do any thing of the sort," replied the colonel.

"And who is that person?" asked Olkoff, in wonder.

"Her father!" replied the colonel, triumphantly in his voice.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PROPOSAL.

"Her father!" ejaculated the old man, in utter astonishment.

"Yes, her father," replied Peyton, coolly and deliberately. "It was plain that he was enjoying his triumph."

"Oh, yes, he is; you see, my means of information are much better than yours."

"Hark ye, sir, I do not believe that you know any thing about the girl at all."

"How ridiculous you are!" exclaimed the colonel, in a tone wherein wonder and sarcasm were strangely blended.

I have already told you that I propose to relate to you the history of this girl, and now, you deliberately tell me that you do not believe that I know any thing about it at all.

To convince you that you are wrong in your surmise, I will relate to you a short story. Eighteen years ago, in the employ of a certain firm in this city of New York, were two clerks; one named Obadiah Olkoff, the other, Harry Belford.

The merchant started at the name and looked searchingly into the face of the other, but the colonel bore the scrutiny without flinching.

"Oh, you needn't look at me!" cried Peyton; he had guessed the thought of the other. "You won't see the features of Harry Belford in my face."

He was right, for Olkoff could not detect the slightest resemblance to the man who had once been his fellow clerk.

"The two men—to continue my story—were chums, although their habits and dispositions were as unlike as day and night. Belford was a free-hearted, dashing young fellow, nothing of the Puritan about him, while Olkoff was sober and reserved; the parson, as he was commonly called. You'll excuse my personal allusion; the man who relates history must speak without fear or favor!" exclaimed the colonel, grandly and eloquently.

"Go on, sir, and be as brief as possible!" said the merchant, coldly.

Certainly; these two men, fellow clerks, fell in love with the same woman, a black-haired, black-eyed beauty, named Louise Carman.

The speaker paused after he pronounced the name, as if to note the effect of it upon Olkoff. He was playing with him as the cat plays with the mouse. But, except that the face of the merchant was a shade paler, he betrayed no sign of emotion.

"Of course a man of your keenness would instantly guess, even if you did not know—as you do—the facts in the case, that the lady preferred the gay and dashing Harry Belford to the sober-minded Olkoff."

Belford would and won the lady. Two years only he enjoyed his bride; then the storm of misfortune came thick about him. His wife deserted him, carrying with her the baby girl that Heaven had sent to bless his home. From that day to this, he has never seen his wife; but, at last, fate has proved kind to him, and he has found his child.

"I do not understand," said Olkoff, slowly.

"Because you do not wish to understand. This girl, Lillian, is the daughter of Louise Belford."

"You can not prove that?"

"Do you want me to try whether I can or not?" asked the colonel, quickly.

Olkoff did not reply.

"In the first place, the girl is the living image of her mother. That resemblance betrayed the secret to you. You loved the mother; lost her; but, now, you have obtained possession of her child. I think that it is extremely probable that the same hand that took the mother from you will also take the daughter."

"You are speaking of the man once known as Belford?"

"Exactly. I understand what you mean by 'once known.' You are insinuating that he is no longer known by that name."

"To use your own word, 'exactly,'" replied Olkoff, dryly. "A criminal from justice—gambler—forger—rascal of all grades; it is not likely that he dares to bear his own name."

"Time, in the wildness of youth, he may have committed some foolish acts, that, for a while, necessitated his speedy departure for a foreign clime; but, that was years ago. Time brings forgetfulness. It is extremely probable that he could walk the streets of New York to-day as Harry Belford without endangering his personal liberty in the least."

"Well?"

"Well!" cried the colonel, in affected amazement. "You speak in a tone of question. Don't you understand? This girl, Lillian, whom you propose to adopt as your daughter, is the child of your former companion, Belford. Belford is still alive; is in New York to-day; he has seen his child; the holy feelings of paternal love swell in his breast, and he has made up his mind to have the girl Lillian."

Full of menace was the tone of the colonel.

"Give the girl up to his tender mercies? Never!" cried Olkoff, impetuously.

"Then he appeals to the law. What power can tear a child from its parent?"

"His bad character—his vile associates—"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Peyton, quickly. "You are speaking of the past, not of the future. Suppose they put you on the witness stand, what can you tell of Harry Belford to-day?"

The chances are ten to one that you wouldn't know him, if you met him in the street. You can say that, sixteen years ago, he fled from New York, to escape a prosecution for forgery; but, since that time, what do you know of him? Can you say aught, good or bad? No! What his life has been since that time, you can not even guess. His record may be as black as ink, or as white as snow."

"You have come here, then, I suppose, as an agent of this man, to demand this girl?" said Olkoff, thoughtfully.

"That is my errand."

"And if I refuse to give her up?"

"Then the father will call upon the courts of law to do him justice."

"Be it so. I will never resign the girl to his hands until I am compelled to do so," replied Olkoff, firmly.

"Now I think of it, there may be a way in which this matter may be arranged," the colonel said, caressing his glossy side-whiskers, with a thoughtful air.

"Indeed—how?"

"Of course, when Mr. Belford discovered that his daughter was in your care, his ancient foe, he naturally felt angry. He was for taking the girl away from you at once, without warning; but, yielding to my counsel, he consented to listen to reason. Mr. Belford is not rich; you are—"

"I understand!" cried Olkoff, scornfully. "This father, whose feelings are outraged because the child—for whom he has never provided—is in my hands, is yet willing to sell her to me?"

"Exactly," replied Peyton, coolly. "You have hit the right nail on the head. It's a pleasure to do business with such a thorough business man as you are."

"I begin to perceive that Mr. Harry Belford is as big a scoundrel as ever," Olkoff said, disdainfully.

"Oh, don't call names. In justice to my principal, I shall have to put them in the bill. The more abuse, the more money it will cost you," and the colonel laughed, quietly.

"In fact, taking advantage of my love for this poor girl, you are going to use her to wring money out of me?"

"That's the idea. As I said before, you are rich—able to pay for your luxuries. We—Mr. Harry Belford and myself—intend that you shall pay for this one," said the colonel, coolly. "We strike oil in you."

"How much?"

"Ah!" and Peyton rubbed his hands together, gleefully. "That's business. Five thousand dollars."

"Five thousand?"

"Yes. For that sum the father will sign the girl over to you. It's cheap. Consider the lacerated feelings of a father's heart—parting with his only child. 'Pon my soul! if I were in Belford's place, I shouldn't let you off under ten thousand."

"Have you calculated the difficulty that your principal may have in establishing his claim to the girl?" asked Olkoff.

"Oh, yes; we have calculated every thing," replied Peyton, confidently. "You are not dealing with chickens, but with two tough old rogues. We've traveled some—seen the world—know the points—how to play 'em; and, better still, we're not afraid of our game, for we know we hold the winning hand."

"Suppose I refuse to accede to your demand, and you beat me at law, and thus take the girl from me, what will you do with her?"

"Make her support the parent, who is getting old and lazy, and doesn't feel like supporting himself any longer. She's young and pretty, tough and strong. If she takes after her mother, she's got a good ear for music. Why, they give large salaries in the music-halls for pretty girls who can sing."

"And her brute of a father would doom her to such a life?" cried Olkoff, in indignation.

"Any thing to make money out of her," replied the colonel, coarsely. "If you don't want her to go to ruin, you had better give our price. Plunk down five thousand dollars, and we'll never trouble you again."

"How long will you give me to think over this matter?" asked the old man, thoughtfully.

"Just four-and-twenty hours," replied Peyton. "Of course, you will not attempt any underhand work between now and then?"

"No, sir!" said Olkoff, quickly.

"It wouldn't do you much good to attempt it, because you've got keen hounds on the scent, and they'd run you to earth in no time, double as you may."

"There are useless, sir. I have given you my word," replied the old man, slowly.

"Now that we have come to an understanding, I will take my departure," said the colonel, rising. "I trust that you will see the wisdom of submitting to our modest demand. 'Tisn't every father that would sell his only daughter for five thousand dollars. It's dirt cheap. At this hour to-morrow, I shall have the honor of calling upon you again. By the way, have five thousand in bills—no checks; great trouble to cash them sometimes, and, once in a while, they conceal a trap. Good-morning!" Bowing gracefully, the colonel departed.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DETECTIVE'S COUNSEL.

With a smiling face, and a self-satisfied look in his crafty eyes, the adventurer descended into the street. He twirled the little cane around in his fingers as usual, and marched down the street with head erect.

"Ah! I shall get that five thousand!" he muttered. "It is a deuced sight better to finger the cash now than to wait and depend upon young Algernon. The chances are ten to one against his ever getting the old man's estate. No, no, I have managed it far better. Mr. Harry Belford ought to be satisfied with the very able manner in which I have carried the affair through. I came near losing my temper once, though; and if that had happened, all the fat would have been in the fire. This cursed hot temper of mine has worked me evil enough already. It's about time that I got it under. Let me get this money, and hard fortune and I will part company for a while. This is the most pleasant prospect that I've had presented to my view for many a long day."

The colonel swaggered along with a far brighter smile on his van features than he usually showed.

To judge from his face, Colonel Roland Peyton had seen some pretty hard times in his life.

Olkoff, after the departure of his visitor, sat for some time in deep thought. The blow that had fallen upon him had been totally unexpected. By accident he had met Lill in the street, saw the wonderful resemblance that she bore to the only woman he had ever loved, and guessed that she was the child of that woman. Acting on the thought, he had dispatched the detective in quest of the girl. And now, as he thought over the past, the shrewd detective, Peters, came into his mind.

"The very man!" he cried, emphatically. "He can advise me in this matter if any one can. I'll send for him at once."

The old gentleman wrote a note to the detective, and dispatched the servant with it.

"There, when he comes, I will lay the whole matter before him. He is a shrewd fellow; used, too, to dealing with these rascals; his advice will be valuable."

Olkoff waited with impatience until Peters arrived.

The detective was shown into the parlor—the servant had luckily found Peters at home—and the old merchant proceeded at once to relate the whole particulars of his interview with the gentleman who had called himself Colonel Roland Peyton.

Peters listened attentively.

"What do you think of it?" Olkoff asked, anxiously, after he had finished.

"An ugly case," replied the detective, with a shake of the head.

"Do you really think so?" Olkoff questioned, in alarm.

"Yes, if this fellow has spoken the truth."

"Oh, there's no doubt but what the girl is the child of the man that he represents—Harry Belford."

"Ah, but there's the point!" exclaimed the detective; "does he represent this man? How can you tell that this isn't a clever device to swindle you out of five thousand dollars? This colonel—about as much of a colonel as I am—is evidently one of these clever 'confidence men'—a genteel swindler. You see, he has presented no proof that the man he pretends to represent is alive."

"That's very true," said Olkoff, thoughtfully.

"If the father is alive, why should he employ this man to act as a go-between? He'll have to pay him for his services, of course."

"That is very reasonable; I wonder that I did not think of that myself."

"Well, you're not used to dealing with these slippery gentlemen. Bless you! they are worse than an eel; you must sand your hand before you can hold them."

"What is your idea of this affair?"

"Simply this; by some means this fellow has become possessed of the girl's history. He comes to you, representing himself as acting for the girl's father; his game is to frighten you into buying him off, by the threat of taking the girl away."

"And suppose I defied his power?"

"It is extremely probable that you would never see or hear of him again. That's one theory."

"Oh, there's another side to the question, then?"

"Of course; and that is, that this man has spoken nothing but the truth—that he is the agent of the father; that the father is living, and will attempt to take the girl away from you, if you refuse to accede to his demand. You see, sir, to make a successful defense we must prepare for him on both points: first, that he is acting without authority; second, that he is possessed of full power to act in the premises."

"Yes, I see," Olkoff felt convinced that he had acted wisely in calling in the aid of the detective. "But even if the father appears, can he take the girl?"

"Yes, sir, I think he can; the law will give her to him. I think I have got all the points in the case. The wife deserted the husband, carrying the girl, then an infant, with her?"

"Yes; she fled to avoid his brutal treatment."

"That doesn't make any difference; besides, it will be a difficult thing to prove after all these years. He did not desert, that we will simply laugh at him and his threats, and threaten his arrest as a black-mailer. But, if we act on the other belief that he really is the agent of the girl's father, and has this Belford ready to come forward and claim her, we have two modes of defense: first, rake up the old forgery charge, and threaten him with it; second, discover, if possible, if some other serious crime isn't attached to his skirts."

"But that will be very difficult."

"Oh, yes; but not impossible," replied the detective, in a confident tone. "From what you have told me of the man, I have an idea that he is not so disposed to live by honesty, if the easy paths of rascality lie open to him. We must gain time; they have given four and twenty hours; we'll take a few more than that number. At present, we have a decided advantage; the girl is in our hands; possession, you know, is nine points of the law—a good old legal maxim. The first move we take is to place the girl in some secure retreat."

"But I gave the fellow my word that I wouldn't use any underhand means between now and to-morrow."

The detective made a comic gesture of despair.

"My dear Mr. Olkoff, if this fellow had agreed to run you a race for five thousand dollars and then requested you to tie up one leg before you started, wouldn't you have objected to it?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"That is precisely what you have done by giving him such a promise. Understand! means!" exclaimed Peters, with an accent of contempt in his voice; "why this fellow would use any means to beat you out of your money. He don't want the girl; he wants your five thousand dollars. Don't you be alarmed; even if the father be living, he won't bring the affair into a court of justice, except as the last resource. He may threaten, but he won't do it until he discovers that you are firm in your determination not to pay the money."

But you have given your word, all right; let Lill stay here until to-morrow; that will

clear your conscience. I will be present at the interview between yourself and this Colonel Peyton. I'll hide in a closet or in the back parlor, where I can hear every thing without his suspecting the presence of a witness. Perhaps I know the bird; these fellows, you know, have as many names as they have fingers and toes—a new one for every day in the week. If he should happen to be an old acquaintance, I may be able to spring a mine upon him that will upset his calculations."

"My dear Mr. Peters, I leave every thing in your hands!" the old merchant exclaimed.

"I'll do the best I can to beat 'em, sir, and I haven't much doubt that we'll come out ahead. But touching this forgery business, do you suppose the forged paper is still in existence?"

"That is doubtful; the affair happened a long time ago; still, it is just possible that it may exist. The junior member of the firm is still living, Mr. William N. Grainger. He resides at Stamford. He has quite a place there; any one in the village can tell you where it is."

"I'll take a run out there at once," Peters said, decidedly. "If we can only hold that forged over his head, the game's ours; that is if the father is living; if he isn't, I shall have very little trouble with this colonel."

With this assurance, Peters departed, leaving the old gentleman quite easy in his mind.

"Sharp as a steel-trap!" exclaimed Olkoff, in admiration. He referred to the detective.

The merchant did not say a word to Lillian regarding the matter that so nearly concerned her welfare. He thought that the knowledge of the conflict that was about to take place as to her guardianship, had better be kept from her.

Affairs passed on as usual that day in the Olkoff mansion. No one could have guessed from the manner of the old man that any thing unusual had taken place.

The household retired to rest early, as was their usual custom. But when, in the morning, the family gathered around the breakfast-table, one was missing. That one was Lillian!

The old gentleman wondered at her delay, and sent a servant to call her, thinking that she had overslept herself.

The servant returned with the astonishing news that the young girl was not in her room, and that her bed had not been slept in the previous night.

An instant examination confirmed the truth of her words.

Olkoff understood what had occurred at once; Lillian had been abducted. The merchant guessed the hand that had dealt so terrible a blow.

(To be continued—continued in No. 65.)

In the Web:

THE GIRL-WIFE'S TRIALS.

A HEART AND LIFE ROMANCE OF THE CRESCENT CITY.

BY EDWIN SOUTH.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WAITING AND WATCHING.

THE sun arose round and red out of the waters of the gulf on the following morning, and looked down upon the deck of the Brazos, and over the wide expanse of limpid, liquid beauty as if pleased with the reflection of its sunbeams, and surprised at the appearance of the landscape.

There were no tapering spires; no belted canvas; no network of rigging to catch the glow of the fresh rays; but, bald and black, the Brazos lay like an ugly blot on the face of the quivering wavelets. There was not a breath of air, not a ripple; but, still and silent was the scene as if the pulse of ocean had been forever quieted by the feverish tempest of the previous night.

Captain Broderick stood amidst his telescope hand, scanning the horizon, while the watch on deck lay upon the forecastle, talking about the danger of the night, and speculating upon the chances of being picked up.

"We have not even material enough to rig a jury-mast," said one, "and perhaps we've only been saved from drowning to starve to death."

"For my part, I'd rather have went overboard with poor Max Clay, last night, than to sit here and waste away," said another.

"Not a speck in sight, my boys," said Captain Broderick. "Not a single speck."

"And that's potty bad for us, cap'n, put in an old seaman, "since it's been discovered that most of every thing in the pantry and storeroom is spoiled."

"Is that so, Jamison?" asked the captain.

"Have you searched carefully?"

"Yes sir, I've searched."

"And found nothing fit to eat?"

"Well, nothing worth naming."

"Did you find any thing?"

"A little salt junk, and a few biscuits."

"Is that all?"

"Every morsel."

"Sure?"

"As I am a liver man."

Captain Broderick drew in a long breath, and then glanced around at the faces that looked up for encouragement from him. At length he said, quite solemnly:

"You've mostly known me for a long time, boys, haven't you?"

"Ay! ay! sir," was the response.

"I've always treated you kind of right, haven't I?"

"Yes, fair and square," answered Jamison.

"I can speak for the hull crew."

"I never took advantage of one of you?"

"No, sir, that you didn't."

"Never asked you to do a thing I wouldn't have done myself?"

"Don't think you ever did."

"Then, I am entitled to a favor from you, boys, now."

"I think so, cap'n; go on."

"Well, now, look here; and as Broderick spoke he glanced searchingly around at the inquiring faces of his dozen seamen. "I biseut, nor a piece of that pork, until these 'ere parties as are passengers get a show at them; especially that 'ere girl. I know none of 'em cross my lips!"

"What do you say, boys? Will we stand by the old skipper now that he hasn't a mast left?" exclaimed Jamison, facing the men.

This allusion to the condition of the Brazos touched the heart of every man present, and a shout went up from every throat, that rung out over the waves. Captain Broderick understood that language so well that the tears started to his eyes, and he said:

"Spoken like men; and boys, I tell you, now, your captain's proud of you."

The long day wore toward its close. The heat had been very oppressive, and the breakers of fresh water had been smashed to atoms during the storm, so that thirst and hunger added not a little to the length of the slow-paced hours.

But now the sun was sinking in the west and the cool breeze which usually accompanies sunset in those latitudes was fanning the parched deck and kissing the white brow of Lillie, who sat at the stern, talking to Dr. Gibson.

"How very calm and silent the sea is," she remarked, after a pause.

"Yes," was the response. "We can now fairly appreciate those lines of Coleridge: 'A painted ship upon a painted ocean' but I have a presentiment that this will not last long."

"Indeed! You are not a fatalist, are you?"

"Well, I can't say as to that. There was a time when I thought men made their own destiny, but within the last few days I think fate has a great deal more to do with our lives than we are willing to confess, at all times."

She looked out over the still water at the sinking sun a moment, and then said:

"Fate weaves the mottled web of life, and hence we get good and evil together."

"Yes, and in some lives fate cruelly weaves more of the latter than the former," answered the doctor.

"In all, I think," replied Lillie. "My life has known more of sorrow than joy. One great calamity is sufficient to eclipse the pleasure of years."

"Yes; but, we recover from the greatest shocks very rapidly," said Doctor Gibson. "Were it otherwise, life would be both unprofitable and unbearable."

They talked thus for hours, and hours, and it was not until the moon began to light up the eastern sky with its soft radiance that they joined Robert Maynard and Major Cecil in the little cabin.

"Well, there is no sign of a sail yet," said the doctor, addressing Cecil.

"Fate is against us, I suppose. Were I less anxious to reach New Orleans, we would doubtless be more fortunate."

Doctor Gibson and Lillie exchanged glances, and Robert Maynard said:

"Let us hope that to-morrow will bring relief."

The next day the crew of the Brazos suffered keenly. The pangs of hunger are at all times terrible, but to be athirst in mid-ocean is at once tantalizing and fearful.

"Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink."

A small glass of water was divided between the passengers, but, on the motion of Doctor Gibson, warmly seconded by Cecil, it was reserved for Lillie.

She was wholly unaware of this, and when she was told to be careful of

REJECTED.

BY C. B.

Oh, loveliest of the lovely and fairest of the fair,
But give me to remember thee one tree of thy bright
hair;
Its wealth descends so lavishly thou surely will not
miss
A gift so very small to thee, but dear to me as this.
Thine eyes of fire flash scornful ire! Alas! alas!
I know,
"Thine eyes of fire flash scornful ire! Alas! alas!"
But, had I all the wealth of worlds, I could not be
more true.

I've striven hard to hide the love which now breaks
wildly forth,
To crush the flame forever down to which your form
gave birth;
Through gloomy days and restless nights I've strug-
gled with my soul,
But now when parting is so nigh, it's passed from
my control.
Oh, lady dear, have pity here! Alas, alas, I know,
"Thine eyes of fire flash scornful ire! Alas! alas!"
But, had I all the wealth of worlds, I could not be
more true.

Alas! I know 'twas fateful work this passion to en-
hance,
As evening's shadows softly fell to watch thy dreamy
glance,
To think of angels as I gazed upon thy peerless
face,
And follow with my yearning eyes thy form's cele-
stial grace.
Oh, lady dear, beyond compare, alas, alas, I know,
"Thine eyes of fire flash scornful ire! Alas! alas!"
But, had I all the wealth of worlds, I could not be
more true.

Upbraid me not, beloved one. My plea is all too
vain;
My wounded soul with anguish writhes; oh, spare
it further pain.
I go! I go! That angry glance is more than I can
bear!
Ah, cruel Hope, why didst thou smile, then yield me
to despair?
Faintly I wove of fruitless love, though rudely
shattered now,
Each quivering string round thee will cling, proud
one, where'er I go;
My drooping heart, though spurned aside, must
e'er to thee be true.

Edna's Love Story.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

"I wonder if I really love her?"
And the sudden, proudly tender light that
leaped to Edna's eyes answered
the half-doubting question he had put to
himself, as he sat there, alone in Mrs. Em-
erson's delightfully cozy breakfast-parlor,
watching the coal flames in the grate and
thinking how like to Edna Earle's eyes was
the flashing light of the fire.

It was a remarkably pleasant room in
which Phil Warrington was idling away
that lonely half-hour that generally inter-
vened between the ringing of the breakfast
bell and his aunt Grace's—that was Mrs.
Emerson—appearance.

Silver was glistening on the small round
table, whose damasks nearly touched the
oak and blue velvet carpet. Fine paintings
were hanging on the walls; blue satin cur-
tains shaded the windows, and the most re-
cherche furniture, the very loveliest of *bijou*
trifles were scattered in graceful negligence
here and there.

Yes, it was a desirable place, this parlor
home of his rich, widowed aunt, of which
this one room was a very modest specimen,
and Philip Warrington knew very well
that if he asked Edna Earle to marry him,
she would have to leave all this splendor,
and make herself contented in a house
where the parlor furniture would only be
Brussels carpeting and a green reps suite,
instead of the gorgeous Aubusson and rose-
pink velvet and satin, ebony mounted and
gilt inlaid of her present home.

But Phil thought how Edna's bright eyes
would lighten up their plain home; how
entirely content he would be with her for-
ever, this cherry-lipped, pearl-toothed girl,
whose graceful witchery had completely
overset Phil's steady graveness.

He could not remember the time when he
had not loved her; the hour he first saw
her, four years ago that very day, when
aunt Grace had brought her, a sobbing girl
of fifteen from her dead mother's grave,
clad in raggedest garb, and with unkempt
hair.

He had seen then the perfect beauty in
her tear-blurred eyes, and on the high white
brow; that lingered around the red, quiv-
ering lips, that displayed itself in every turn
of her rounded, slender frame.

He had pitied her most earnestly, and
not unduly, for before aunt Grace
had decided to keep Edna for her companion
and friend, Phil Warrington had given the
girl his whole heart.

He had kept his secret well, so far as
words went. Perhaps Edna might have
told a different story of the mighty silent,
yet eloquent passion that was ever looking
from his eyes.

So Edna had come to be a beautiful young
girl, and Phil was not alone in his love for
her; he knew that, and that was why he
was thinking it all over again, for the thou-
sandth time, that sunshiny morning in Mrs.
Emerson's breakfast-parlor.

He knew he loved her, and yet, in his up-
rightness of soul, he wanted to be surer still
that he could offer her a heart worthy of her.

Then, breaking in upon his meditations,
came a fair fresh girl, her hair floating off
over her shoulders, her eyes radiant with
health, her face flushed, her lips dewy and
coral red.

"Good-morning, Phil—am I intruding?"
How exquisitely her voice was pitched—
and Phil got quickly up and took both her
hands.

"You intrude, Edna? I was thinking of
you—I always am thinking of you, Edna,
and wondering if I may dare have you.
May I?—oh, my Edna, my darling!"

And just as a swift, rare blush mounted her
white forehead, Mrs. Emerson sailed in, with
suspicious eyes, and a suggestive heralding
hem.

"I'm sure you're not such a fool, Edna
Earle! But it's no more than I ought to
expect! It's the way of the world, I suppose.
It's gratitude, isn't it, for you to turn around
and let Phil Warrington fall in love with
you, when you know it spoils all my plans
for him and June Christal?"

Edna sat very patiently and quietly under
Mrs. Emerson's sharp words, only a flutter-
ing of the white eyelids, and a crimson tinge
stealing up her cheeks, denoting how deeply
the blows were striking.

But Mrs. Emerson could not see how cruel-
ly she was wounding the girl, so she went
on, sharper and harsher.

"When I took you out of poverty, and
made a lady of you, and dressed you, and
educated you as I'd have done my own daugh-
ter, I never dreamed you'd use the weapons
I put in your hands against me. But it's only

verifying the old adage, 'Warm a viper and
then it will sting you.'"

And then Edna arose slowly, and as if it
hurt her to move, from her seat.

"Mrs. Emerson, even from you, who are
my best, my only friend, and whose kind-
ness I never will forget—not even from you,
can I take such an unjust imputation. I never
tried to win your nephew, I never knew
you intended him for Miss Christal; but
this I do know and say, that Philip War-
rington is not the man to be disposed of by
any person."

Mrs. Emerson looked up at the now pale
features of the girl; never before had Edna
attempted to contradict her on any subject.
She had come to think there was no temper
in her.

"Mrs. Emerson," again began Edna,
quietly, "to prove to you I am not ungrate-
ful, to prove I am not the viper who, you
having warmed and nourished, would seek
to sting your benevolent hands, and more
than all, because my mother's last words
were that I should always yield implicit
obedience to the friend who had lighted her
darkest days, I will go away from here, from
Philip Warrington, that you may have
ample opportunity to enable you to secure
Miss Christal for him."

There had been a gathering scorn and bit-
terness as she spoke, and now her words
fairly overflowed with contemptuous sar-
casm. Perhaps Mrs. Emerson was impul-
sively glad she may have been surprised
into silence, or it might have been sullen
doggedness; but certain it is, she did not at-
tempt to arrest Edna's quiet, composed de-
parture from the room, and house.

When she went down for dinner that
night, she told Philip the story, and he
abruptly donned his hat, a stern-faced,
anxious-eyed man, and left her, too, to per-
sue the thoughts he knew must come to her.

Not only in romances, but in real life, do
three years make startling changes. Many
a grave will be dug, many a friend be
laid away, while one is living along three
quiet, uneventful years. But graves and
deaths are not such dreary changes as came
to one of the characters of this story; a si-
lent resting-place would have been better to
Mrs. Grace Emerson than the harsh realities
of a life from which its sole sunshine was
stricken, only a short twelvemonth after she
had indirectly driven Edna Earle from her
doors, and Philip Warrington after her;



EDNA'S LOVE STORY.

whose two faces she had never since seen,
and for whom she so yearned in these latter
days of misery, privation and poverty.

Her riches had taken wings; she had speculated
unwisely, she had trusted poor counselors,
and now, when age was creeping over her,
she had no friends to assist her, or even
comfort her.

I think she remembered Edna Earle in
those days, with a feeling that, amid all this
misery, Edna's would have been a true
heart, and a strong arm. Then, if she had
only let the two alone, Philip Warrington's
house might have been her home now, and
his wife her support and comfort.

But it was her own doings; and Mrs.
Emerson thought so, as she leaned wearily
against a tree, and watched a young, girlish
form coming through the shady woods.

Somehow, the gait, the size, reminded her
—yes! the hot blood flew to her old, sorrow
face as she saw that it was Edna, her white
lawn skirt rustling over the grass and fallen
leaves; a straw summer hat carelessly tied
over the sweet, sad face.

She pulled her hand over her faded hair
—she, Mrs. Grace Emerson; while Edna
came tripping along, a lightness in her step
that her face denied.

Edna glanced pleasantly at her; there
was no reason why she should have recog-
nized in this poor, humble countrywoman,
who might be on her way home from mar-
ket, the wealthy woman she had seen last
surrounded by every known luxury.

"I think I am not on the road to Mel-
ville—can you tell me my good woman?"

It was Edna's own gentle voice, her old,
sweet smile; and how that woman's heart
ached.

"Just yonder; you live herabouts?"

"Since yesterday only," laughed Edna.

"Governments, like I, often change places."

Then she went on, and Mrs. Emerson
watched her out of sight, wondering at it all!

It wasn't far to her own plain home—al-
most under shadow of the great home where
Edna was living, and a young man was
standing at the door.

"Can it be possible—aunt Emerson. And
you thus? I knew it would be in poverty,
but I did not think so gaunt."

Was it a dream? or was Philip War-
rington's hands reached to hers? Had she seen
Edna with her own eyes, or was that and
this also, a wild chimera?

"Phil!—Phil! my boy, you will forgive
me and forget all this, because I can reunite
what I have separated. Phil, I have seen
Edna! I—"

He swung her hands fiercely.

"You have seen her? for mercy's sake
where?"

That was so like Philip of old; and Mrs.
Emerson smiled at him. She had not smiled
for two years.

"Come, let us watch, for she will pass
here on her return."

And the two watched and waited, silent,
solemn, yet strangely thoughtful. Then
she came, fair, sad, beautiful as the day she
had left them; her white robes fluttering,
her hair wind-blown on her pink cheeks;
all unconscious that the one prayer of her
life was just to be granted.

It was a plain little parlor, with the Brus-
sels carpet and green reps Philip had
dreamed of; but he and Edna were very
happy; while in her own room, up-stairs,
aunt Grace lives a peaceful life that she
never can be sufficiently thankful for.

Hoodwinked:

OR,

DEAD AND ALIVE.

A Tale of Man's Perfidy and Woman's Faith.

BY A. F. MORRIS, JR.,

AUTHOR OF "RALPH HAMON, THE CHEMIST," "THE
WARNING ARROW," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A WOMAN'S ANGER.

LORD HALLISON BLAIR found his wife
standing in the center of the boudoir, gazing
toward the door through which he entered.
Her perfect form was drawn to its fullest
height; her lustrous eyes sparkled with a
purer brilliancy than ever before marked by
him.

"Well, my lord," said Pauline, regarding
him steadily, "you have condescended to
come at last."

"Excuse my delay, love; it was impos-
sible sooner. I was very busy."

He smiled. His manner was studiously
collected; no trace of his late excitement
the least visible.

"Busy? At what villainy now?" she
asked, quickly.

"Villainy?" he repeated, in astonish-
ment; "what do you mean?"

"I mean, sir, that I have understood
your base nature—your vile hypocrisy.
You have long and successfully deceived

Casting aside all restraint, Lord Hallison
Blair sprang forward, crying hoarsely:

"I must kill you! You know too much!
You shall die!" and he grasped her, appar-
ently set upon this horrible performance.

A piercing scream rung from her lips;
she struggled in his tenacious hold.

At that instant, there was a loud rapping
at the door, and the voice of Brandt said,
hurriedly:

"Lord Hallison, come here—quick!
Come here!"

"What do you want?" huskily inquired
Blair, still retaining one arm around Paul-
ine, who had fainted, and clutching her
fair throat the tighter.

"Come quick, Lord Hallison! Madge
Marks is gone!"

"Curse her! What do I care? Do you
come in here and help me. Hurry!"

The physician appeared, and as he did so,
there was a stifled exclamation of horror
from the opposite side of the room, where
stood Pauline's waiting-maid, who, alarmed
at her mistress's shriek, had hastened to see
what was the matter.

"Seize that girl! Seize her!" cried the
nobleman; and Brandt, only comprehending
that immediate action was necessary, leaped
to the maid, secured her, and clapped a
hand over her mouth ere he realized the
state of things.

"You are strangling her, Lord Hallison!"
he exclaimed, as he saw the deadly grip in
which Pauline was held. "Don't kill her!
What's the matter?"

Seemingly to have changed his mind
through a sudden idea, rather than being in-
fluenced by Gulick Brandt, Hallison Blair
released Pauline's throat, and lifting her un-
conscious form in his arms, made toward
the door, saying:

"Wait till I come back—wait for me
here. Don't let that girl escape you."

He left the room and walked rapidly
along the entry with his burden. Then,
with a crook and a turn, he continued
through a side passage, leading by a spiral
staircase to the top of the house. Arrived
at the upper landing, he opened the door to
still another entry, narrow, long, low,
passing thence to a small room, secluded
from the main portion of the mansion, into
which he carried his wife. Placing her
upon a sofa, he departed hastily, having
first taken the precaution to turn the key in
the lock. On leaving the by-passage, had
he turned his head, he would have discov-
ered a tall form, intently silent, with eyes

till she suffered intense pain; "if you dare
lip one hint of what you have seen or
heard, I will certainly kill you, as I meant
to kill her! Do you understand me?"

"Oh! yes, yes; if you tell me she is safe,
indeed, I will say nothing. I will keep si-
lent. I will never let anybody know—you
are hurting me, my lord. Please let go my
wrist."

"Remember," he admonished, hissing,
threateningly. "If you tell any one, your
doom is sealed! Now go!" and she fled
from the room.

"What have you done with your wife—
Pauline?" asked the doctor.

"Never mind her. I will attend to her.
Come, we must look to the detective."

They returned to where Diego awaited
them, and the three started for the fencing-
room.

"You owe me fifty pounds, my lord. Re-
member that," said the bull-fighter, as they
moved away.

"Yes, Diego," Blair assented, "and fifty
more when you get the body adrift in the
Thames."

"Good. I thought it."

When they reached the room where they
had left Joe Fleet lying on the floor, appar-
ently lifeless, judge of their astonish-
ment, upon opening the door, at discovering
—nothing!

He was gone!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

JOE FLEET DEFINES HIS POSITION.

SCARCE five minutes had elapsed after the
departure of his would-be assassins, when
consciousness began to assert its sway; and
gradually the detective recovered from the
effect of Diego's dreadful blow. He sprang
to his feet, and gazed about him bewild-
eredly. Then he advanced and tried the door-
knob, to find that he was securely fastened
in. But, as he turned again to the center of
the apartment, he smiled complacently as
he took out his diary, and scribbled hastily
on a loose sheet:

"Send posse of police to St. James Square.
House of Lord Blair. Hurry up! Devil to
pay!"

That'll fix that!" tearing out another
leaf, and writing as follows:

"Come to St. James Square. House of Lord
Blair. Hurry! You must come! Devil to
pay in full!"

And that'll do for that! Now, then,
my worthy lord, we'll see who plays trump
on this trick. Um! Can't beat me! Can't
do it! I'm Joe Fleet, I am!"

Crossing over to the window, he raised
the sash, and leaning out, blew a shrill
whistle.

In a few moments two policemen met,
running, on the pavement directly beneath
him.

"Here!" called the detective, who could
but faintly distinguish their outlines in the
gloom, "it's me—Joe Fleet—Secret Service
—here's a note. Take it to the nearest sta-
tion! Be quick! Watch for it!" and let-
ting fall the first note, it fluttered lightly to
their feet.

"Here's another," he continued, casting
out the second slip. "Take that to the
Hotel. Ask for Mr. Hassan—give it to him.
Be quick, now! I'm a prisoner! Cut-throats
and assassins up here! Run!" and as they
hurried off, the detective left the window.
Folding his arms, he paced to and fro, mut-
tering, with sarcasm: "The villains! Try
to kill me, eh? Me!—Joe Fleet!—detective!
—secret service of London! Um! very good!
I'll be even with them. There's another
pickle for 'em to suck. Oh! won't there
be a mess when Messrs. Blair & Brandt find
me alive and kicking, and lots of police on
hand? Ha!"

He paused and listened. Some one was
coming toward the fencing-room. Close at
hand was the iron image which had served
Diego Perez. In a twinkling he had whisked
himself behind this, and none too soon; for
he was scarce out of sight when the door
opened, and the noble, the physician, and
the bull-fighter entered.

"He's gone! Lord Hallison! He's gone!
We are undone!"

"Silence, doctor; you are a fool!" ordered
Blair, sternly; though his own amazement
at not finding the detective was not with-
out its suggestions of fresh troubles. "What
do you make of this strange disappearance,
Diego?"

"Do I not see, like you, that he is gone?
What more is there? Am I a magician,
that I can tell wonders where other men
marvel?"

Advancing further into the room, Blair
overturned a heap of coats and leggings in
one corner, as if he expected to find the de-
tective hidden there. Then he turned to the
image, and was about to look behind it,
when a sound of tramping feet and murr-
ing voices fell upon his ear.

"What's that?" he exclaimed, under his
breath, turning to Diego Perez.

"Dios!" surlily returned the Spaniard,
"why do you aim questions at me? I
know not. Here comes one who may tell."

As he spoke, a coming footstep was heard
in the hall without, and a servant, panting
for breath, dashed in among them, saying:

"What is the meaning of this, sirrah?
Why this disturbance below?" demanded
Lord Blair.

"D-d-d-d-if you please, m-m-m Lord, the
hall's full o' coves who-who who w-w-w-
want you, my lord! Police! 'ere they 'are,
a-comin' up 'ere, my lord," and he was dis-
torted with shivering and shaking.

The Englishman paled. Gulick Brandt's
face turned white as a sheet. Diego Perez
scowled and ground his teeth.

"Back! Back to the hall!" cried Lord
Blair, "and say your master offers twenty
pounds to every man who will defend this
house and me against the intruders!" Then
to the physician: "We are caged. You must
fight. Get a sword—quick!" and he snatched
a light saber from its hook, while a savage,
defiant gleam lighted his dark, serpent eyes.

"It's too late, my lord! It's too late!"
brokenly ejaculated the servant; "ere they
be a-comin' now—oh!"

The confusion of sounds had now as-
cended the main stairway; the stamp, clatter
and shuffle of numerous feet drew closer
along the entry.

Driven to it by force of his perilous situ-
ation, Brandt armed himself with a rapier,
and took a stand beside Hallison Blair.

Diego Perez tore a broadsword from the
wall, and giving utterance to a roar like an
enraged bull, bounded toward the doorway.

As he did so, a number of servants crowd-
ed in, keeping him back like a solid
wall, and in vain he threw himself against
them in a mad effort to break through.

The Spaniard's object was to get out, and
off. He cared little what became of his
two companions after that; but finding his

bent upon him, and mouth drawn in a sig-
nificant smile. It was Madge Marks. Her
sleep had ended abruptly as it had come
upon her. Arising from the lounge in the
room where she had been stricken down in-
sensible, she glanced about her in surprise,
but soon remembered all.

"I must leave quickly. Devils and fiends!
Diego foiled me in getting me to drink! It
shall not be so again. When there is busi-
ness—then no liquor. I swear it!" She
stole silently from the room.

As she was about to advance to the stairs,
she heard persons ascending; and, to avoid
an encounter, she fled noiselessly in the op-
posite direction, concealing herself in an al-
cove at the further end of the hall.

Two men entered the room she had just
left; one kept on, halting before a door near
her, and disappearing inside. The latter
she recognized as Lord Blair.

Prompted by curiosity, she went to the
door, and listened attentively to what passed
between the husband and wife.

She chuckled with satisfaction as she
drank in every word of Pauline's indignant
outburst. She was aroused from her eaves-
dropping by the approach of Brandt, and
had barely time to regain her concealment
when the physician paused at the same
door.

Then came a scream; Brandt cried out
that Madge Marks was gone; and in the
same moment, he, too, disappeared into the
room.

Presently the door opened; Blair came
out, carrying Pauline; and Madge Marks
followed after him like a specter.

Lord Blair returned to find the physician
as he had left him—still holding the terri-
fied girl, who trembled as her master re-en-
tered the boudoir.

"Mark me," he said, advancing, and ad-
dressing her sternly; "if you do not wish
to die, you will be quiet."

She clasped her hands imploringly, but
could not speak, so firmly did the physician
press his hand across her mouth.

"Let her go, doctor."

When Brandt released her, she sunk upon
her knees, and wept.

"Oh! tell me, my lord—what have you
done with my mistress? Where is she?
Oh! oh! you have killed her! you have
killed her!" and hiding her face in her
apron, she burst forth in a tempest of
hysterical sobs.

"Silence, girl," commanded the English-
man. "Your mistress is safe enough. She
is unharmed. But heed what I say," (tak-
ing her wrist, and closing his fingers over it

way, blocked, he fairly howled, and forced his way through only to be confronted by the law deputies.

"It's the Spaniard! seize him!" Then began a struggle. The bull-fighter was well known to those who faced him as a desperate character, and one for whose arrest the authorities had frequently given order. They attacked him with their batons, and he fought and raved, circling the bright steel about his head with lightning quickness and furious strength; but his fierce resistance amounted to naught. Wherever he struck, there seemed to be a dozen batons ready to receive and turn the blow; and with every stroke, a dozen batons bruised him in a dozen different parts, until, bruised and bloody, he tottered back into the fencing-room; the sword fell from his grip; he sunk to the floor, exhausted, to be immediately seized and bound.

Headed by their sergeant, the policemen filed in on one side of the apartment, while the wondering, trembling servants shrunk before them.

Blair leaped to the iron plate, and, placing his back against it, brought his weapon to a guard. In this action he was initiated by Gulick Brandt.

"Back!" cried the former. "back, I say. If you court death, then come on. The first who approaches me, dies. I will slay you all sooner than be taken. Back! You dare not lay a hand on me—"

A form whirled around the iron target; the saber was knocked from the Englishman's hand; a strong grip was fastened on his collar, and Joe Fleet, in a voice of tantalizing calmness, said:

"Can't, eh? Nobody lay a hand on you? Mistaken. See? I've got you tight! Now, don't by any means allow yourself to become excited, my lord. It's unhealthy even for the nobility. Joe Fleet, I am."

Lord Hallison Blair glared upon the detective, and nearly choked in discomfiture as he thus found himself overpowered in an instant by the man he had considered his victim.

Gulick Brandt, with a wail, let fall his rapier, and offered no resistance when strong hands laid hold upon him.

"Here's somebody that'll make you feel bad—rogue!" continued Fleet, slightly shaking the nobleman; and he pointed to Victor Hassan, who, at that moment, entered, followed by Calvert Herndon.

At sight of the latter, Blair gazed as one who doubts his vision. Gulick Brandt tottered and fell in a faint.

Joe Fleet was evidently well pleased with "the situation."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A RED TABLEAU.

With face of ashen hue the now thoroughly cowed Lord Blair turned to Calvert Herndon and gasped:

"You—you are alive!"

"Ay," returned the merchant, sternly, solemnly, "alive, and come to confound you, miserable wretch! justice demands that you be delivered up. The injured victims to your inhuman plottings await to see you punished. Are you prepared to render an account to the Supreme Being for your wickedness? Oh! villain—"

"Mercy!" fell from the nobleman's lips, in an involuntary breath, his hitherto strong spirit now completely broken down.

"Mercy?" repeated Victor, gazing fixedly at his enemy. "Mercy? You ask mercy at our hands? Had you mercy for us—for me, when you tore from me a cherished idol, and would have blasted my whole existence? You strive to brutally murder two persons, and blight the hopes of a third, and yet cry for mercy! In the hour of your downfall you cringe before your fellow-men, and, with lips that never knew a prayer, but rather given to the defilement of Holy Writ, crave pardon! Ask pardon of your God! It is not ours to grant. Where is Pauline?"

Before Blair could reply, the moment's silence was broken by a howl, as Diego Perez, who had wrung his arms from the hold of his captors, though not extricated them from their bonds, darted from the room.

"Quick, Madge Marks—cut these ropes! My knife in my bosom. Quick!"

In a second the ropes were sundered; and none too soon, for two policemen were upon him, their batons raised to strike.

With a yell, he swung his great arm aloft. Crash! came his huge fist between the eyes of the foremost, and ere the second could act, Diego was gone down the passage.

"Answer my question, Lord Hallison Blair," pursued Victor, advancing; "where is Pauline?"

"Yes, where is she?" screamed a cracked voice at the door, and Madge Marks stood before them with a glare of hatred fixed upon Hallison Blair.

"She is here," immediately cried another voice, and Pauline ran from behind the hag. Two men exclaimed fully at her appearance; one man, even in his despair and chagrin, shot a baleful, fiery glance at those now reunited.

Pauline seemed not to notice her wicked husband; all others, save one, were lost in that riveted gaze which fastened upon Calvert Herndon. Her beautiful brown eyes widened, her breath seemed checked as she beheld her father, like an apparition from the grave, holding out his arms to receive her.

"Pauline! Pauline, my child!" "Father! father!" All doubts were at rest, and in another moment she was nestling to that parental breast.

Victor, despite the consideration that she was the wife of another, instinctively clasped her to his breast.

"Come," said Fleet, addressing the sergeant in a business tone, "take these rascals away. My Lord Blair says he'll go peacefully."

"He's not a lord!" screamed Madge Marks, shrilly; "he's a low-born villain! He's my nephew! He's the son of my sister, Sarah Marks. Her husband's name was Gregor—his name's Hallison Gregor!"

When Madge entered the room, a policeman had instantly seized her, and as she thus spoke, he shook her roughly, saying:

"Silence, hag!" "I will not," she persisted. "I know him well. He's my nephew. I took the true son of Earl Harold to America, many years ago. This man is only Hallison Gregor, my sister's child."

"Ha!" exclaimed Victor, stepping to her side, "you knew Victor Hassan in his infancy? Do you know this woman?" baring his arm, and holding up to her view the coat-of-arms of Blair, with the name.

For a moment she gazed upon the device; for a moment she bent a close scrutiny upon his features; then she cried:

"It is he! You are Victor! You—"

She was interrupted by the detective, who, having been noting attentively, what she said, now enjoined upon the man who held her.

"Keep her tight. Important witness she is. Good! Everything goes on nicely. How do you like it, Lord Hall—?" Blair was no longer at his side, and he whirled around to discover the Englishman in the act of committing suicide.

He had snatched up the fallen sword, springing backward out of Fleet's reach; the hilt was against the floor, the point at his breast. Before a hand could stay him, he threw himself upon the weapon; the sharp blade pierced his heart, and, without a groan or a cry, he sunk, lifeless, at their feet.

"Bad—very bad, that!" commented the detective, as a murmur of horror arose simultaneously on all sides. "Cheated the law, after all. I—eh? Hold on! Stop him! Catch him!" The latter exclamations were called forth by a sudden commotion created by Gulick Brandt, who, half mad with desperation, had broken loose and dashed off in the confusion.

He was pursued, but managed to escape from the house, and that was the last ever seen or heard of him. What became of him after that night is a problem, that even Joe Fleet never could solve.

He was sorry, was disappointed, at this unlooked for turn. He had anticipated a rare case in the courts, as a result of the *ecceps* in which he had figured; when, here, everything was quite spoiled, through one of his prisoners having committed suicide, and the others having effected their escape.

The officers were dismissed, but Fleet remained to attend to matters.

Pauline, with her father and Victor, retired to a private parlor, where they could enjoy, in privacy, the emotions incident to their blissful reunion—blissful even with the shadow of wrong and death over that household.

Fleet joined them shortly, and tendered his congratulations, inquiring, at the same time, if they had decided upon a course.

"Can we not go back again to America, dear father?" suggested Pauline.

"But, what of Victor, my child?" replied the merchant, glancing at the young man. "He has a title to receive—a position to fill in England."

"Title, father?" "It was then she learned of Victor what the reader already knows; ascertained that he, instead of the man who had been her husband, was the son of the deceased Earl Harold, and sole heir to the titles of that nobleman.

"But I care little, if at all, for either title or estate now, Mr. Herndon," said Victor, gazing lovingly at Pauline; "Pauline is released to me, and I am possessed of unrivaled wealth in her love."

"Well," interposed Fleet, "I express my opinion that you'd all best go to roost. It's late—very late. To-morrow you can arrange matters to suit yourselves."

"Mr. Fleet—" began Victor, as he was about to go.

"Joe Fleet, if you please," interrupted the detective.

"I must thank you for the great, great service you have rendered me. I owe you my life, and—"

"There! That'll do. Go to bed. Go to sleep. Get some rest, sir; get some rest. Clear your brain for the debate to-morrow. I've got something to look after before morning. Good-night." And as Victor, bidding him good-night, passed out at the door, he continued: "Um! I'm glad of this. Half expected they'd sit up all night! Very sensible they are. Now, I'll see if the servants have attended to defunct Blair, and then to the private papers, etc., to see what I can find. I want to know how Gulick Brandt got into the position of executor, after Herndon destroyed the will to that effect, as I have been informed was the case. I'll see. Got an idea."

He went to the fencing-room, and seeing that everything had been properly attended to, first dispatched a servant for the undertaker, and then proceeded to carry out the idea he had conceived.

As detective Joseph Fleet ascended the stairs to the floor on which were the sleeping apartments of the late Hallison Gregor, a distant bell chimed forth upon the still air, denoting the hour of two, and as the clear notes echoed four strokes, Fleet mused.

"Two o'clock—and an echo, which is two more. Twice two are four, and now I will explore. So—thus slowly drags the night, and all is quiet."

CHAPTER XXX.

HOME AGAIN!

Two months later. The day was fine, the wind fair, and a steady breeze filled the white canvas of a noble vessel as it steered seaward, bound for that haven for true hearts and warm souls—America.

She bore upon her neat decks five passengers, who have figured as important characters in our narrative, viz: Calvert Herndon and Pauline—the widowed Lady Blair—Victor Hassan, S. J. E. Krank, and Pauline's former waiting-maid, Kate.

It had been decided that Victor should not advance his claim to the lordly title of the deceased Earl of —; the young man being doubly persuaded by the merchant, who promised ample income for his daughter and her husband, for a brilliant wedding was to take place immediately upon their arrival in New York.

The lawyers, who had promised themselves an interesting court proceeding, were somewhat disappointed on ascertaining the altered intentions of their client; but, a liberal fee sufficed to pay them for what small trouble they had already been at, to procure the restoration of the papers in their possession, and to insure their silence in regard to the matter. Thus the proposed testimony of the ex-superintendent and Kate was done away with.

Their future was, however, fully provided for. Krank, being appointed a pleasant position in Herndon's house, and Kate once more waiting upon her beloved mistress, Pauline.

Of course the widow of deceased Lord Blair duly received her portion.

Joe Fleet had been well rewarded, and had given promise to hush the rather tragical romance to the extent of his ability. But just sufficient leaked out, as is generally the case, to create a sensational gossip, which was augmented by the sudden departure of Lady Blair from London.

The sensation created by the advent of Calvert Herndon, after so many had seen him consigned to the tomb, is another point upon which the reader must give his, or her, imagination play.

The callers at the Home Mansion, when it was again thrown open to life and gaiety, were numerous, and rumor, like a rolling snow-ball, grew in bulk as it spread about.

The merchant was overrun with visitors, whose curiosity made them eager to know by what miracle he had, as it were, arisen from the grave.

Madge Marks was liberated by the London authorities, after obtaining from her much important testimony, but on condition that she would leave the city immediately. This she complied with, and we take it for granted that Diego Perez went with her, for neither were seen again about their favorite haunts, and, among others, Joe Fleet was glad of the riddance.

A lovely night—the first snow of winter. Houses, trees, bushes, and ground are clothed with the soft, pure mantle of flaky white, which, though unlike the blooming and refreshing luxury of springtime, that adorns nature in sublime majesty and inspiring grandeur, is not without a charming effect. The air is hushed—but hark! there's music sounding. It seems smothered in a distant place, yet distinct, and floating to the ear in gentle cadence. A glowing blaze of light falls from the windows of the Home Mansion upon the glittering crust without, and forms are fitting to and fro in the mazy dance.

A jingle of sleigh-bells sounds on the road; gay laughter of ladies and gentlemen drowns the strains from violin and flute, and another party has arrived to participate in the festivities.

Here we pause, hoping that the joy inaugurated on that happy evening, when the parlors thronged with well-wishing guests, lasted, without a mar, through earthly life, and always—

—health and innocence
Transport the eye, the soul, the sense."

THE END.

The Winged Whale!

OR, THE MYSTERY OF RED RUPERT.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "SCARLET HAND," "HEART OF FIRE,"
"WOLF DEMON," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MESSENGER.

UNDER the trees crowning the bluff that frowned on the dark waters, where Bayou Achee leaped into the embrace of the bay, stood the Yankee, Andrews, and a stalwart stranger, clad in a sailor's garb. By the side of this sailor hung a cutlass, and a heavy pistol was thrust through his belt.

Andrews had just dismounted from a horse, whose heaving sides told that he had been ridden hard.

"Where's the captain?" asked the sailor, who answered to the name of Will Edwards.

"Yonder in Pensacola," replied Andrews, a gloomy look upon his shrewd face.

"Why didn't he come with you?"

"For the best of all reasons, he couldn't. He's a prisoner in the hands of the Spaniards."

"A prisoner!" exclaimed Edwards, in astonishment.

"What is to be done?"

"At present, nothing," Andrews replied. "When the dons capitulated the cap'n, I managed to escape. There's an old Injun chief mixed up in the affair. He promised me that he would free the cap'n. The old red-skin seems to know all about us and our expedition. With the Injun I scouted around the shanty where they've got the cap'n locked up. Then the chief told me to wait at a certain spot with two horses for an hour; if he and the cap'n didn't come within that time to mount one of the horses, ride down here and get fifty men ready. Then to wait here until I heard from him."

"I suppose the idea is to make a sudden dash, carry off our cap'n and then retreat."

"Yes; but it was hard work to make out what the red-skin did mean. He don't say much, and what he does say is awfully mixed up."

"I don't like this land business, for my part," said Edwards, thoughtfully; "these are our elements."

"It can't be helped. If we should run the brigantine up, the dons might put the cap'n out of the way. Our only hope is to make a sudden dash and surprise 'em. You may as well get the brigantine ready for sea, though; there's no telling what will happen in the next twenty-four hours. I've a notion that there's fun ahead."

"So much the better!" cried the sailor, rubbing his hands together, gleefully. "I'm getting tired of skulking down here in the bushes. The boys are spoiling for a fight, and they wouldn't like any thing better than a brush with the dons."

"They'll have all the fighting they want pretty soon, or I miss my reckoning," Andrews replied.

Then a sailor approached, conducting a horseman. The two came directly up to Andrews.

"A messenger for the captain," said the sailor.

"I wish to see captain Vane instantly," said the horseman, who was a little, stout-built man, dressed roughly. Both man and steed were covered with dust, and showed the traces of a long journey and hard riding.

"I'm afraid that you can not see the captain at present," Andrews replied.

"But my business is of the utmost importance," urged the messenger. "I am the bearer of dispatches from General Jackson."

"I am sorry, but the captain at present is in Pensacola, and although I expect him every moment, yet circumstances may detain him there for some time."

"I understand," said the messenger; "he is noting the weak point of the enemy. A service of danger and one that suits well with the captain's daring spirit."

"I am second in command, Lieutenant Andrews; are your instructions to deliver the dispatches into the captain's own hands?" the Yankee asked.

"Yes, sir," replied the messenger; "they must be of great importance, as the General's orders were to spare neither myself nor horse, but ride as if I rode for life, and to be sure and deliver the dispatches into no other hands but those of the captain."

"Well, you will have to wait, then," Andrews said. "I expect either the captain or a messenger from him every moment. Where is General Jackson now?"

"He was to encamp to-night on the Perdida river."

"He is on the march then for Pensacola?" Andrews said, in surprise.

"Yes; at the head of quite a large force."

"I can understand now; we are, probably, to co-operate with the land forces in an attack on the city."

"I should not be surprised," replied the messenger.

A sailor with a night-glass in his hand approached the little group, coming from the sea side of the bluff.

"Lieutenant, a small boat is in the bay, making for the bayou."

"A small boat?"

"Looks like one of those fishing smacks," the sailor added.

"Get the light ready then; we'll have to start the whale out arter 'em. The demon will frighten them away. You look after that, Edwards," said Andrews.

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied the sailor, Edwards, and he started away; going, not to ward the sea, but landward to the bayou.

"I'll take a look at the critter, myself," said Andrews. "If you come with me, sir, I'll show you a clever Yankee trick that has just frightened the life out of the bay fishermen."

He spoke to Jackson's messenger.

"I shall be pleased," the messenger replied.

"And, Tom," Andrews addressed the sailor who had brought the intelligence of the boat's approach, "give 'em the light as strong as you can."

"Oh, never fear, sir!" cried the sailor, laughing; "I'll do it up brown."

The sailor retraced his steps to his lookout on the summit of the bluff. Andrews and the horseman, who had dismounted and tied his horse to a tree, followed.

From the summit of the hill they commanded a full view of the bay, although the darkness of the night—the moon was obscured by a heavy cloud—limited the extent of their vision.

Afar off on the dark waters, but approaching each minute nearer and nearer to the entrance to the bayou, was the white sail of the little boat.

Steadily on came the light craft, dancing like a thing of life on the white-capped billows of the bay. Straight she steered for the dark mouth of the bayou. A sailor's hand was evidently at the helm.

"They intend to run into the bayou, confound 'em!" Andrews cried, annoyed, as he watched the progress of the craft.

"They will discover your presence here then," the messenger said.

"Yes, if they don't see something to make them get out of the bayou quicker than they came in," Andrews replied.

"Why, what should they see?" asked the messenger, in astonishment.

"The most awful sight that a man's eyes ever looked upon," Andrews replied.

"There's a demon form—a water devil—in the shape of a Winged Whale—that haunts the bayou and is certain death to strangers, particularly Spaniards. Wait till you little craft enters the channel, here and you'll see a sight that will make your hair stand on end."

The messenger listened to the strange words of the sailor with wonder.

"You are joking with me," he said, at last.

"Am I? Well, you jest wait and see," Andrews replied, with never a smile on his weatherbeaten features. "If it don't frighten you out of a year's growth, you can call me a stick-in-the-mud."

"Such a thing as a Winged Whale never existed!"

"In nature, no; but this awful critter is all of nature. Don't I tell you it's a demon, ready to swallow folks alive, only it never gets the chance, as none of the dons seem anxious to cultivate its acquaintance. They sail into the inlet as bold as thunder, but the way they get out of it when the Winged Whale comes beats all possessed."

The incredulous look upon the face of the messenger told plainly that he thought the shrewd Down-easter was playing a joke upon him.

"When I see the Winged Whale, I'll believe that it exists," he said, doubtfully.

"Well, you are jest the most awful feller to convince that I ever did hear tell on," said Andrews, a shrewd smile creeping over his face. Then he noted the position of the boat. It had entered the channel that led to the bayou.

"Keep your eyes about there," and as he spoke, the Yankee pointed to the bayou, north-west of where they stood. "In less than a minute you'll see it. If you have got any prayers to say, I guess you had better get 'em ready."

And as the messenger looked in the direction indicated by the outstretched arm of Andrews, to his utter astonishment he beheld a peculiar bright light floating on the surface of the water. Ere he could express his amazement, a dark form appeared in the center of the light; it was a huge sea-monster with wide outstretched wings, eyes that shone like balls of fire, and a mouth which vomited forth flames.

For a little minute only the awe-struck eyes of the messenger looked upon the terrible monster, for, over the surface of the water, came the clear hail:

"Winged Whale, ahoy!"

As if by magic, at the sound the monster and mystic light disappeared; all again was darkness. The messenger rubbed his eyes to convince himself that he had not been dreaming.

Andrews had listened attentively to the hail. A smile of delight came over his face at the sound.

"It's the cap'n, by jingo!" he cried.

"The captain?" said the messenger, not yet recovered from the effect of the strange sight that he had seen.

"Yes; I'd swear to his voice among a thousand," Andrews replied. "He has managed to escape from the dons. Come, let us to the beach!"

Andrews and the messenger hurried down. But, by the time they reached the beach, the boat already had made a landing. Rupert and Isabel stood on the beach, surrounded by a dozen stalwart sailors, who gladly welcomed their leader.

Isabel, leaning on Rupert's arm, looked around her in astonishment.

"Are these men the dreaded pirates of Lafitte?" she asked herself, as she gazed upon the many faces of the seamen.

"Welcome, cap'n!" cried Andrews, in glee. "Here's a messenger from the General with important dispatches."

Rupert tore open the dispatches eagerly, and by the light of a torch which one of the sailors carried, scanned their contents.

"The time for action, lads, has come!" he cried, in joy. "Andrews, see that every thing is put in readiness to sail by daylight. By noon, to-morrow, I'll have ample ven-

geance for all the wrong that they have done me in yonder city."

"That's the talk! Hurrah for action!" cried Andrews, in delight, and a sturdy cheer went merrily up on the night breeze and woke the echoes of the bayou as it died away, far in the distance.

"You shall take possession of my cabin, Isabel," he said, in an undertone, to the girl, "until we reach New Orleans. There a minister will make you mine forever."

"Your cabin?" said Isabel, in astonishment.

"Yes; I have a surprise in store for you," he said, smilingly. "Soon you shall stand on the deck of my ocean kingdom."

Just as the first gray streaks of the morning light began to line the eastern skies, the old Indian chief woke Rupert from his slumber with the intelligence that the Spaniards would attack him by daylight, from the sea!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ATTACK.

THE morning sun was some hours old in the heavens when the coasting schooner that bore Captain Estevan and his men arrived off the mouth of the bayou.

All within the inlet was still; no sound or sign gave evidence of the presence of a foe.

Estevan stood on deck, Lieutenant Cadova by his side. At the helm, guiding the course of the schooner, stood the fisherman, Pablo, who had been employed as pilot.

"Can you take the schooner into the bayou?" asked Estevan, surveying the narrow passage with an expression of doubt upon his features.

"Oh, yes, senor," the fisherman replied, quickly; "there is water enough there to float a frigate."

"Is there not danger of an ambushade?" asked Cadova, glancing anxiously at the wooded banks of the inlet. "As we pass through, a raking-fire of musketry would tell terribly upon our crowded deck."

"It is not likely that this fellow has more than half a dozen men with him," Estevan replied, scornfully. "I do not think that they will dare to attempt to fight us," and Estevan glanced proudly at the warlike array that surrounded him. "So run the schooner into the bayou, pilot."

Pablo obeyed the order. Obedient to the helm, the craft forged through the narrow inlet and entered upon the bay beyond. As she swung round the point into the bayou, a huge dark form, lying motionless upon the surface of the water in one of the little inlets that dented the shore of the bayou, met the eyes of the Spaniards.

Rogue, who formed one of the party, recognized it at once.

"It is the water demon, asleep!" he cried, in horror.

Estevan was choking in the embrace of the tide. Vainly he struggled; unable to swim, death alone awaited him.

"Help! save me!" he cried.

But in that hour of peril, the life of the captain was worth no more than that of the common soldier. Some of the men, luckily, clung to the boat, but Estevan, drifting slowly away, could do nothing but wait for a last, mortal help. He beat the water vainly with his hands, shrieked in agony for aid, struggled feebly, and then the dark waves closed over his head, and Estevan, the Spanish captain, sunk, to rise no more.

The waters of the bayou settled the debt of vengeance owed by the Spaniard to Red Rupert.

"Do you surrender?" cried the shrill voice of Andrews, as he laid the brigantine alongside the schooner.

"Yes, senor," replied the lieutenant, Cadova.

Rupert, with a score of men, boarded the schooner.

"Where is Captain Estevan?" the sailor asked, as his eyes rapidly glanced along the deck in search of the Spaniard.

"Yonder, beneath the waves," replied the Spaniard. "He attempted to escape, but the boat upset, and he was drowned."

For a moment Rupert was silent. He had come prepared to meet a foe, for the first time placed by fortune in his power, but death had robbed him of his victory.

"I am sorry for his death, although he was my foe," the sailor said, slowly. "I should have made him my prisoner, but his life would have been safe in my hands. Heaven is my witness that I did not wish to take his life, although he assailed mine more than once. But that is all over now. The grave ends all hatreds."

"What is your pleasure, senor, respecting myself and men?" the officer asked.

"Let your men give up their weapons and retire below. I shall put a prize crew on board. Your final disposition will rest with General Jackson, into whose charge I shall commit you, when he arrives," Rupert replied.

"This loss will be a sad blow to the commandante," said the Spanish officer, regretfully. "If, as I hear, it is the intention of General Jackson to attack Pensacola, I presume that you are acting in concert with him."

"Yes, senor," Rupert replied; "yonder craft is the American privateer, the 'Winged Whale,' which I have the honor to command. I shall proceed at once to Pensacola and attack the fort, unless your commandante has the wisdom to surrender."

Soon the Spaniards were disarmed and placed below the hatches. One of the petty officers of the privateer, with some twenty men, was placed in charge of the prize, and then the brigantine, passing through the narrow inlet into the broad waters of the bay, turned her sharp prow northward, toward the doomed city of Pensacola.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 57.)

The Avenging Angels:

OR,
THE BANDIT BROTHERS OF THE SCIOTO.

A BORDER AND INDIAN TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SILENT HUNTER," "QUEEN OF THE WOODS," ETC.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A BLOW FOR A BLOW.

THE whole assembly of Indians held their breath, while looks of mingled astonishment and admiration were exchanged on all sides. The quick, decisive act of the Indian, the calm exterior of the scout, when the sudden and vindictive attack was made, created something of a revulsion of feeling on the part of the Shawnees.

"Rattlesnake is a hot-headed youth," said Theanderigo, coldly; "such is not the death a man should die. The soldier of the long-knives, Never-miss, does not ask it. He says to the Shawnees, 'Ye have a warrior for your prisoner, and will treat him as such. If I am to be tortured, let it be such as no ordinary man can bear.'"

Steve smiled grimly at this intimation.

"If you can get me to boast, Indian, do that all I am, I say again, a white man, as God made me, and nothing else. I have spoken. As for Rattlesnake there, I'm obliged to him, since he would have slain me as in fair fight; but if he'll loosen these yam bonds and give me a little air, I'll send him howling among the petticoats like a whipped cur as he is."

Steve said this with a strong show of honest indignation, but in reality to try and provoke the other to use violence. He was determined to act with all the manliness of which he was capable, but he too well knew the fiendish devices of the red-skins to hope to escape without some demonstration of frail humanity's weakness.

Steve was now left to his meditations, and, after a while, ever released from his bonds, that he might have both the physical and mental power to endure tortures such as require all the strength and energy. Nothing, it is true, delights the savage more than the shrieks and yielding of the flesh on the part of his victim; yet do all enjoy the scene of a strong man's anguish as a preliminary.

The scout was free—that is, free to use his arms and legs in the way of taking exercise, if he pleased; but as walking about would give his enemies an idea that he sought some opportunity to escape, the white hunter scorned the act, and, therefore, seated himself on a log close to the post which, in all probability, would serve as the instrument of his execution.

One thing puzzled him much, and in the hour of approaching death worried and annoyed him.

It was not Martha who had been villainously slain by his knife, who was it?

His eye was too keen, his memory too certain for him to have any doubt. There were the clothes belonging to Martha, whoever might be the person who wore them. Now this subtle, apparently so unimportant as to dread a moment, seemed to prey upon the mind of the hunter—superstitious, like all of his time, race, and simplicity of character.

Suddenly his meditations were interrupted by a husky voice, while a foot seemed to spurn him from his seat.

He looked up and saw lowering at him a warrior of about fifty—a hideous, ill-shaped drunken savage, plentifully bedaubed over head and breast with the scarlet clay of the Wabash, his dark, shining eyes glaring furiously at Steve.

"I am Catamount," he said, striking his naked breast; "where is my son, Soosoma?"

"I don't know and I don't k'are," replied Steve, angrily; "but if you put your foot on me again, this child'll be apt to get riled."

"Lost son—Soosoma—good hunter," continued the man; "kill bear, kill buffalo, catch fish, feed old father, feed old squaw, feed little pappoose, kill white man, kill long-knife, kill Indian, kill squaw, kill pappoose, all scalp—now dead—where is he?"

"Your son was killed in fair fight," said Steve, quietly; "and you may thank your stars he was a natural-born fool, or else my friend Kenewa would have scalped him."

"Too much lie!" roared Catamount, and forgetful of every consideration but blind fury and personal revenge, he clutched his tomahawk; while not even the savage animal from which he got his name could glare at his shrinking prey with more hideous and appalling ferocity than he did at Steve, who stood erect before him with a bright and beaming eye.

"Too much lie!" he screamed, as he lifted up the dangerous and fatal weapon.

"Mind yer don't hurt yerself," said Steve. But the man, furious at the other's coolness, and utterly regardless of the threatening shouts of his countrymen, who were coming toward the spot at the top of their speed, darted the bright weapon full in the hunter's face.

The scout stood calm and erect, and, to the astonishment of all, caught the tomahawk in his uplifted hand, and with one rapid blow brained his antagonist on the spot; then with a wild cry, which showed how much of savage characteristics he had imbibed, he bounded over the plain in a direction which enabled him to face only women and children, who, alarmed at his weapon, his fierce mien and terrific bounds, gave way, screaming, in all directions.

Scarcely one word, but paused an instant to see that the chief who had brought this upon himself by his intemperance was really dead, and then all bounded in pursuit, making the valley, the rocks, and the forest echo again with their loud, angry and long-repeated cries.

The flight of Steve, though in reality a hasty and sudden determination, was, however, carried out with a systematic plan. Though not originally intending to try the elasticity and spring of his muscles, he yet had so well pondered all the chances of such an attempt, that he started with a definite plan in his mind; and this was, to enter the forest, dash for the hills, make round the ridge at the head of the valley, and then cross the stream. Arms he had none to stand at bay with, as a tomahawk was useless in a contest with either bows or firearms. All his hopes were in his power to outrun and outwit his pursuers, to do which, on their own ground, was indeed a difficult and almost hopeless task.

The plain on which the village was situated was some thirty acres in extent, while the village formed one edge near the stream, the forest the other. On the verge of the latter was a long fringe of bushes, toward which Steve dashed at headlong speed.

While still dashing over the plain, with high and vaulting bounds, to defeat the aims of his pursuers, several rifles were discharged at him, but without effect. But his eccentric movements, the hurry-scurry of the pursuers, and the terrible confusion into which the whole camp was thrown, prevented any from aiming with coolness.

He could hear the bullets whistling past him, cutting twigs from the branches at his side, yet not one touched him.

Steve turned and saw that, through these hasty and ill-considered efforts, he was gaining on the Shawnees; but he saw also, that a select party of youthful runners and braves were dashing down the stream to round the rock, and thus intercept him. Thankful to have seen this much, he waved his tomahawk on high, gave a wild halloo, and plunged into the forest.

As soon as he was sheltered from observation, he slackened his speed, which was the more required as he was about to ascend a hill. That it was steep and rugged mattered not.

Presently the slope became even less difficult, and covered with green sward. Here, however, Steve slackened his speed, not so much to gain breath as to reconnoiter. Behind him were the Shawnees, whooping and yelling like demons. But these he did not care for, being principally intent on discovering what had become of those to his right. That they were about to attempt creeping on him unawares he was sure. Therefore, clutching his tomahawk, and continuing on his way, he soon reached the summit of the hill; bounding over it, he rapidly descended toward a dark and gloomy bottom, through which a tiny rivulet trickled on its way to the stream below.

The bottom was full of trees, upright, bent, and fallen, of all sorts and sizes. One old sycamore lay almost recumbent on the ground, though still growing, having gradually given way, as its support, an oak, decayed and fell.

Up this Steve ran with the agility of a monkey, looked down, and saw that there was an open space below, some twenty feet distant; then, collecting all his energies, he leaped through the air from a high, nearly as great, alighting without harm, on the ground. In front of him was a fallen tree, all covered with vines and ivy, and over this the scout bounded, and next moment lay recumbent on the other side.

On came the furious Shawnees, now joined by the runners who had taken to the left. Next minute they were at the bottom of the glen, rushing about quite at fault, shouting, yelling and threatening in a way that might have appalled a heart less stout and fearless.

One or two came, presently, bounding down the slope, up the other side, and over the tree, persuaded that now they were in reality close upon his track.

But all leaped over the tree without observing the fugitive, who lay under the ivy and vines, panting, and with a heart that throbbed as if about to break. Presently the glen was silent, even the birds of the air having been scared by the hideous cries and execrations of the baffled Indians.

Soon, however, he heard them returning, and on their way he heard the bushes with sticks, and coming in a semicircle in the direction in which he was concealed. "With a caution and deliberation thoroughly characteristic of the man, he rose on his hands and knees, peered up and down the glen, and seeing no one, returned, slowly and quietly, the way he had come."

Anybody who had seen him would have thought him quite mad, as his steps were directed toward the village, in sight of which in a quarter of an hour he found himself.

Then gathering up all his strength and courage, he walked deliberately across the plain, unseen and unnoticed by any, until the chief warriors, happening to turn their angry glances that way, saw him standing erect and calm at the post which had been erected for the torture.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TEST.

WHY had Steve acted in this inexplicable manner?

Simply because it struck him that, once his escape looked upon as a certainty, the savages would be worked up to a high pitch of frenzy, from which Tom and the women might suffer.

At a sign from Theanderigo, the Shawnees now closed round the scout in a circle, the center of which was formed by the victim himself. All were armed, even to the boys and every brow lowered upon him. But the scout, now that his mind was altogether made up to meet his fate, stood stern, impassible, and solemn, his eyes fixed on vacancy, as if already preparing for that eternity which appeared so near him.

"The pale-face runs like a deer," said Black Hawk, coldly. "Why does he return to face the friends of those he has murdered?"

"I ain't murdered no one. Bah! a coward stinks, my nostrils—who would strike an unarmed foe, until his hour had come?"

Though the words contained a deadly insult to one of their tribe, none murmured. Their victim was safe now.

"My brother speaks words of wisdom. But, if he was like a deer, why has he doubled up like a fox?"

"Harkee! Mister Theanderigo," said Never-miss, in rather a pettish tone, "if the Catamount hadn't put my dander up I sh'dn't 'a' killed him; if I hadn't 'a' killed him I sh'dn't 'a' run away; and if I hadn't have known you Indians as well as you know yourselves—I shouldn't 'a' come back, for I had escaped, which your braves can not deny."

There was a deep pause of earnest and anxious silence.

"Does my brother wish to keep the reason of his return a secret, or will he whisper it to a chief?"

"No—I ain't got no secrets, thank God!—but it kinder struck me, Black Hawk, that if I got away scot-free, there might be gals of my color, who must suffer in the first burst of your rage—and that's why I com'd back—dunder!"

The Indians looked at one another. This generous self-denial on the part of the renowned hunter and runner, whose fame was better known on the frontier than that of many generals and captains who had served in the wars, made the more generous-hearted of the tribe still more desirous of securing him as one of themselves, and on whispered order from the chief the ranks of the men opened, and two women advanced into the arena.

"It ain't no use," said Steve, with a groan.

"My brother will hear," replied Theanderigo, courteously.

Steve shrugged his shoulders and prepared to endure a trial which his knowledge of Indian customs made as repulsive to him as even the approach of death itself.

One was old, the other was young. The former hideous as expense, ill-savage, hard work and age could make her—a very hag; the other, pretty and bashful.

"I am Killcup, the wife of Catamount, who, when her husband was in the death-struggle with two panthers, slew the little ones. Cruel pale-face, you have slain the husband of my youth—the father of my children—his wigwam is empty. Look—this is Wildrose—take her. You are great hunter of the whites, turn from the long-knives, let a single kind of the Shawnees nestle in your bosom, and Killcup will forget that your hand is red. I have said."

"Well, Killcup, and you, Wildrose, I wish you hadn't put me to this trial. My skin is white, and neither my color nor my ways will allow me to take the darter of the man I have killed to wife. I'm sorry for you!"

"Cruel pale-face—who will feed my children?"

The Lord!—in whom I advise you to put your trust, if I do, I say, away, and let me die in peace! I am a pale-face, a long-knife, a man without a cross; as such I have lived, and as such I shall die."

The women, both angry and vexed, now burst open the vials of their wrath, assailing Steve with such a volley of epithets, as only fury, rage and mortified pride could have originated. It was a fearful volcano of passion, to which, however, having once spoken his mind, the scout paid not the least attention.

Now did he offer to defend himself, or retaliate, when the angry old crone flew at him, and aiming at his hair, would have torn him to the ground but for the intervention of Black Hawk. This chief was evidently lost in astonishment at the courage, endurance and self-devotion of the scout, and eager even at the last moment to save him. But as his motives might be misconstrued and his authority despised by his tribe when he went openly against their feelings, he waved his hand to an attendant party of young men, who began at once to bind him.

The scout stood as unconcerned as if he were not the party principally interested. He submitted his limbs without a murmur, and when they had so encircled him with ligaments that he couldn't walk, he smiled grimly in their faces.

"Feel mighty like a baby," he muttered.

He was now carried to the post, and bound to it in such a way that he could neither move nor fall. In this position he had the pleasure of seeing the women and children busy preparing splinters, which he was well aware were to be stuck into his flesh, and then set on fire. He could also see the mischievous and cruel urchins—all bad boys are cruel, and Indians are all bad boys—collecting together the fuel which, at the last, was to scorch his limbs and deprive him of that life which as a man and a Christian was so dear to him. He saw them, too, sharpening their knives, and many of the elder boys busily making small bows and pointed arrows, which were to be shot into his quivering flesh.

But Steve, the scout, swerved not, though aware that he was about to suffer, perhaps, hours of deliberate, cruel and awful torture.

Now, with all his philosophy, courage and powers of endurance, he had no pretension to be possessed of that brutal apathy which so often enables the red-skin to bear tortures at the stake which scarcely a white man is able to endure without flinching.

There were some among his enemies who, utterly hopeless of subduing the scout by physical tortures, yet trusted that at the last moment an exhibition of generosity on the

part of the chief might prevail. These had given secret orders that none but experienced, brave and reliable men should enter the lists on this trying and memorable occasion.

The first trial was to be that of the tomahawk, which, when red-skins were bound to the stake, often ended the exhibition; for when the victim dreaded that his physical system was about to give way under the intense agony of his sufferings, he would then, by his taunting reproaches and reviling language, endeavor to drive the infuriated tormentors to acts of violence.

This, however, was not expected from the white-skin scout, so that all were desirous of trying to upset his nerves, so as to make him ask for mercy.

Half a dozen warriors now darted into the arena, tomahawk in hand. Their object was to throw this dangerous weapon so that while it whizzed past the victim's ears, it should not hit him, the mark being a stout tree behind the pole to which he was fastened. This was a most trying and dangerous experiment, as, despite the expertness of the savages, a mistake was easily made.

None then but the most expert were ever allowed to try their hands upon the sufferer, and such was particularly the case in the present instance. This was perhaps fortunate for Steve, for all were recognized as masters in the difficult art of tomahawk throwing, and would therefore be more anxious to exhibit their agility and dexterity than to slay their prisoner.

When Steve saw the six grim warriors glide into the arena, he cast such a glance upon them as one having a bet upon the transaction might have done, and remained calm, not a muscle of his face moving, not a blink of the eye nor a quiver of the lip showing what he really must have felt.

The first man who stood forward was a stalwart brave, who, as he poised his weapon, sought by the very sternness and hideousness of his face to make the scout attempt, at all events, to move his head from one side to the other. All the while he appeared taking steady aim, and yet his little shining weapon moved not, until at last with a rapid jerk that was well calculated to make any one's cheek blush, he let fly, without any preliminary flourishes, and the tomahawk, whirling in the air, cut a chip off the pole close to the prisoner's cheek, but without making him move a muscle or even wink.

Again glances of meaning were exchanged—glances of mingled regret and admiration.

All expected that at any rate the scout would have shut his eyes, but he looked the Shawnee full in the face, disdaining the usual and natural expedient which, in the eyes of the Indians, would in no wise have derogated from his character as a brave and undaunted warrior.

Others followed, and still the captive remained the same.

Then a youth came leaping into the circle, whose presence made every heart leap wildly. A kind of sympathetic feeling toward the prisoner had now arisen in many a bosom; so far will genuine courage outweigh every other consideration in the eyes of savages.

This young warrior, the son of Theanderigo by one of his older and discarded wives, a youth of merciful character, would not probably have been allowed to compete, but that the rank of his father forbade any interference on the part of the many. But though of a flighty temperament and an elasticity of body which prevented him from ever really standing still, he was brave in the extreme, and promised to become a warrior of no little renown and position.

He carried two tomahawks, one in each hand; and this peculiarity about him it was that caused so much excitement in the circle of warriors, made the children clap their hands, and the women thrill with emotion, for the sight of danger is a kind of voluptuous enjoyment to the sex.

The Leaping Boy, after a variety of unmeaning but graceful flourishes, which might have done credit to the gentlest acrobat that ever threw a somersault upon the stage, stood back, assumed the attitude and stiffness of a statue, lifted his arms in the air, and then, whirr! went the tiny weapons, pregnant with death, toward the victim. All held their breath, and next instant a simultaneous breath of relief showed how deeply the feelings of the multitude were excited.

The tomahawks flew past the prisoner, cutting his gray locks that waved in the wind, but doing no harm.

"Touch and go, Master Shawnee," said Steve, with quiet humor; "but a miss is as good as a mile."

The scout seemed to have forgotten his personal interest in the matter, and to think only of the skill of the throwers. None ventured to try their hands after the Leaping Boy, though in the next trial, that of throwing the knife, many showed themselves almost equally skillful, which so aroused the general good-humor that a very little show of yielding on the part of the brave scout would have ended the whole ceremony.

But the white man was doggedly bent on asking no favor of his enemies, while the thought of escaping by any deceitful or disgraceful compact never entered his head.

Theanderigo looked at him steadily. The scout shook his head. This decided the savage chief, and from that moment all the worst passions of his nature were let loose upon Steve, upon whom he determined to practice all the severity and cruelty that a long-knife could expect from an inveterate and cruel foe.

A party of riflemen now advanced close to the prisoner, and, without giving him any warning, began discharging their guns right in his face, over his head, with such rapidity as to dazzle the eyes of the prisoner. This, however, was but the preliminary to the real trial by rifle, which is the most dangerous and risky of all such experiments, as a hair's breadth more or less is the utmost latitude that an experienced marksman allows himself.

Steve now seemed to elevate himself an inch; his eyes were cast once upward toward heaven, for at last the moment had come when he must die; if not by the bad shooting of a race not generally distinguished as good marksmen; while, if this mercy was not vouchsafed to him, then the trial by fire would speedily put an end to his sufferings.

Again he saw fragments of dried wood collected near the sapling, the splinters of which were intended to be thrust into the flesh of the victim.

But, just as a chief walked backward with his rifle ready cocked, and then halted to take aim, there rose on the air a cry so startling that all stood still an instant to learn

the cause of this interruption to the proceedings of the day.

On the plain, standing on a mound almost close to the village, was a man in the garb of an Indian, but so bedaubed with paint that his lineaments could scarcely be distinguished. He was wholly unarmed, not even a knife being visible. As soon as he saw that he was noticed he stopped, lifted his arms in the air—the usual sign of amity—and then let them fall meekly on his breast.

"My brother is welcome. Let him enter the village of the Shawnees," said Theanderigo.

The man bowed, turned, tugged at a rope, and next instant descended toward the wigwams, leading what appeared to be an enormous bear.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 55.)

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SWINGING ON THE GATE.

BY JOE JOY, JR.

When I have nothing else to do,
I love to sit and muse
On childhood's days long gone by,
And pastimes out of use;
And while there's many things forgot,
Kind memory brings of late
The times when you and I, Janette,
Went swinging on the gate.

And oh, it seems so long ago
Since you and I were boys—
Or both, if that's your choice;
When all the world was new to us,
And sorrow had no weight
To lay upon our happy hearts
When we swung on the gate.

The twilight star above us glowed
As to and fro we swung,
A merry song of life and love,
The croaking hinges sung;
We heeded not your mother's call
That it was getting late,
But in defiance of commands
Kept swinging on the gate.

And once, while lost in dreams, we swung,
The brittle hinges snapped,
And down we came upon the walk,
And got our noses scraped;
Your father came in anger out,
And home he sent me straight,
And never since that hour have we
Went swinging on the gate.

The Bankrupt's Daughter;

OR,
THE GAME THAT DID NOT WIN.
An Episode of New York.

BY CAPT. CHARLES HOWARD.

WHEN the simoon of commercial ruin had spent its fury, Gilbert Howland found himself bankrupt. People had thought that the pitiless tempest would not harm him, and they stared incredulously at the paragraph telling of his ruin. It was too true! The rich merchant of yesterday was almost a beggar to-day.

He did not follow the example of many, and sink under the shock. No! he kept his head above the waves, and at once commenced seeking employment, whereby to gain a livelihood for himself and daughter. The ruined merchant was a widower, and Florence his only child. She was very beautiful, and had many suitors for her dimpled hand up to the moment of the bursting of the storm. Then, with a single exception, they left her, as rats desert a sinking craft—left her, because the diamonds which had sparkled on her bosom had gone to satisfy her father's merciless creditors.

Men pitied Gilbert Howland because he bore up under his misfortunes like a man, and bravely faced the cold world. He obtained a situation on the old police force, and soon became known as an efficient officer. He and Florence dwelt in an old house in a poor part of the city, and lived as happily there as they had in their palatial mansion, now the property of strangers.

I have said that, with a single exception, Florence Howland's lovers relinquished their suits when she descended the stairs of poverty. This exception was a middle-aged personage named Wilde Havens, a superintendent of police. He was reputed quite wealthy, had sprung from an aristocratic family, and wielded a vast influence in the city.

Perhaps Florence Howland thought herself above me when she was the belle of the avenue," he muttered, one day, when alone in his office. "But now, now she can harbor no such thoughts. The ex-merchant secretly disliked me then; but now he will encourage the suit I am resolved to press. Florence will lend a willing ear to my words now; she will be eager to wed one who can return her to the circle she lately graced—so eager, that she will readily overlook my not angelic countenance and mental blemishes."

The superintendent tried to ingratiate himself into the good graces of the gray-haired bankrupt, and, to all outward appearance, succeeded. Gilbert Howland detested his corrupt superior, but smothered his dislike, for he knew that the utterance of his thoughts would cause his dismissal from the "force."

So Wilde Havens often crossed the threshold of Florence Howland's humble abode, and held converse with her many a long hour.

"Father," said the beautiful girl, one day, "Wilde Havens has asked me to become his bride."

The ex-merchant looked up from his tea, while a flush of indignation crossed his face.

"And what did you tell him, Florence?"

"I told him no," she answered. "Oh, father, have I done a wrong?"

"No, child, no," cried the old man. "On the contrary, you have done a noble deed. Wilde Havens is unworthy a woman's love, and sooner than see you his wife, I would fire this house and perish in the flames! He will be revenged for your words. I look for an expulsion from the force now. But let him do his worst. God, who noteth the sparrow's fall, will guard us with his omnipotent arm."

With the shades of night came the revengeful superintendent to the bankrupt's dwelling. He found his subordinate and daughter in a scantily-furnished apartment, the former seated at a desk. Approaching him without uttering a word, the visitor drew an official envelope from his bosom, and threw it upon the desk.

"That contains your dismissal from the force," he said, with emphasis, as the old man took up the envelope. "It also contains another document which may interest you. Read them at your leisure, my dear Howland."

The last sentence was uttered with a sneer, and the speaker retreated toward the door.

"Florence," he said, pausing upon the threshold, and fixing his lustful eyes upon the bankrupt's daughter, "your last words still rankle in my heart. I love you. I have asked you to become my wife, but you have refused. Reconsider your reply. Tell me that you will become mine, and yourself and father shall exchange this hovel for a mansion on the avenue."

"Wilde Havens," answered the young girl, quickly, and with great calmness, "you have heard my reply; need I repeat it? I will never become your wife, so help me Heaven!"

A cloud of anger enthroned itself upon the villain's countenance, and the outburst of rage that followed was prefaced by an oath.

"So mote it be! But I have not done with you yet, Florence Howland. No! the contents of yonder envelope are but the beginning of my revenge. You have de-

scended the stairs of poverty; you shall descend those of degradation, and land, God only knows where. I swear it, by heaven, earth, hell, the dead, the—"

"Cease, villain!" cried Gilbert Howland, rushing forward with clenched hand. "Finish your oath beyond my threshold; go! and concentrating his strength, the bankrupt hurled the scoundrel from the room, and slammed the door upon his detested form."

A sardonic laugh, full of meaning, parted Wilde Havens' lips as he walked away.

Quivering with indignation, Mr. Howland returned to his desk, broke the seal of the packet, and read the order of dismissal, signed by the general superintendent of police. He next opened the second document, and to his astonishment, discovered it to be a copy of a deed which conveyed, for a certain sum of money, the house he occupied to his bitterest enemy, Wilde Havens.

In silence he passed it to his daughter, who read it with colorless cheeks.

"Father, that villain is determined to effect our ruin," said Florence. "What shall we do?"

For a long time Mr. Howland did not speak. Tears filled his eyes. He thought of his daughter, not of himself. He knew that Wilde Havens' hate would never abate, and he feared that his fearful oath would be fulfilled.

"Do not despair, Florence," he said, folding his child to his heart. "We will find another dwelling-place."

"But where, father, where?"

Yes, where?

He stared blankly at her, unable to reply.

The following morning they received a summons to vacate the premises within a certain time, which was near at hand.

For days Mr. Howland sought employment in vain. No roof offered shelter for the twain, and, at last, the almost heart-broken bankrupt saw his scanty furniture tumbled into the street.

Suddenly a gentleman, of prepossessing appearance, approached the wretched man, and said:

"Will not yourself and daughter accompany me to the Astor House?"

Gilbert Howland answered in the affirmative, and at the hotel the stranger made known his name and business.

His name was Isaac Darnly; business, banking in New Orleans. Twenty years prior to the present time, he reached New York a poor young man. Then Mr. Howland was a millionaire. He gave Isaac



THE BANKRUPT'S DAUGHTER.

some money, and told him to let it be the foundation of a fortune. So it proved to be. In the Crescent City he soon became wealthy, and had journeyed to New York for the purpose of befriending the man who had befriended him.

Gilbert Howland and his daughter accompanied the banker to New Orleans. The ex-merchant was created cashier of a flourishing banking-house, and, a few months later, Florence wedded the noble man who had saved her from ruin.

Thus was a villain thwarted.

Camp-Fire Yarns.

Fight with a Rattlesnake.

BY CAPT. BRUN ADAMS.

"MILLER'S SPRINGS" and "Old Joe Miller"—not the Mormon saint—are connected with some of the most pleasant, and, in one instance, the most fearful recollection of my life.

The springs are situated in the heart of an extensive range of "knobs," the Kentucky name for second-rate mountains, and the country round about is as wild and rugged a bit of territory as could well be found, abounding with game, and, to use a phrase peculiar to those regions, "chock full" of rattlesnakes.

I do not know if the Kentucky rattlesnakes differ, save in size, from any other of that terrible species of reptiles, but I do know that nowhere else have I ever seen them so large, so exceedingly fierce, and so old, if one may judge from the number of rattles upon the tail.

To see one of those "rusty" fellows in coil, head erect and vibrating, jaw thrown back, terrible fangs erected, and eyes flashing fire, is a sight that will not soon be forgotten. But, bad as they are, the natives do not seem to fear them much.

I presume that here the old adage, "Familiarity, etc.," holds good, as it is said to do in every thing else.

I remember once, while out after turkeys, with old Time Downs, the crack shot of the knobs, to have seen an instance of this indifference.

The old hunter had sighted a gobbler through the dim mist of early morning, seated upon the topmost limb of a great oak on the edge of the timber, and while creeping around an old, decaying stump, about which the weeds grew thickly, to obtain a good

position for a shot, he was bitten upon the exposed ankle by a huge rattler.

I heard the shrill alarm in time to look around and see the old hunter spring back, exclaiming:

"Ef the cussed thing hain't bit me, may I be—"

After which he coolly advanced and crushed the reptile's head with the butt of his rifle.

Carefully laying the heavy piece on the ground, he said, "Fetch it along, boy. I ar' go't to make tracks!" And away he went in a lope toward the house, some half-mile distant.

Of course I hurried on, full of dire alarm, and when I reached the cabin, expecting to see my old friend in the agony of death, a most singular scene met my eyes.

Extended upon the bed, coolly giving directions, lay the victim, while alongside stood the "old woman," a gallon jug of whisky in one hand and a pint tin-cup in the other, out of which she was dosing him.

He had swallowed two cups full before I got there, and was emptying the third, after which he turned over, fell asleep, and woke up twenty-four hours after a well man.

But, I hear the reader ask, what has this to do with my adventure?

It is simply introductory, nothing more.

I had been across the mountain that morning, and was returning to the springs by a short cut over a part of the country with which I was not at all familiar.

In the course of time I awoke to the reality that I was lost, and adopting a plan that has never yet failed me, I threw down the reins and allowed my mule, Bob, to have his own way.

Trusting fully to the intelligence of the animal, I gradually sunk into a reverie, from which I was presently aroused in a manner at once startling and disagreeable.

As I glanced hastily around, I saw that the mule attempted a most difficult passage, one that even under favorable circumstances could hardly have been made in safety.

The path he was following, which had once been a cattle-trail, ran along the base of a steep hill, the rocks rising sheer up upon the right hand, while the precipitous bank of a creek, now dry, lay upon the other.

The trail had been a good one, but the action of the water, during freshets, had gradually cut the earth away until there was scarcely two feet of roadway left.

The mule had advanced along this until he reached the narrowest place, and then, when too late, discovered that he could neither go forward nor backward.

This of itself, however, would have been of little moment, but there was another and greater danger at hand.

The sound that had recalled my wandering thoughts was one that has never yet failed to strike the hearer with a feeling of terror—the keen, sharp note of the rattlesnake as he prepares to strike.

I had just time to take in the situation, when my mule, almost paralyzed with fright, reared, slipped, and went crashing over the edge of the gully, carrying me along with him.

He fell square upon his side, of course pinning me to the earth, as I had no time to withdraw my foot from the stirrups.

The bottom of the barranca was so narrow that the mule became wedged, as it were, and despite his furious struggles, was unable to rise.

But here again a greater danger, a horror, put to flight all thoughts of the lesser, and at the same time drove from mind the knowledge of the fearful pain in my crushed limb.

I have a dim consciousness that as the mule went down the hideous monster made his spring, missed his aim and came rolling down the steep bank right upon me.

Instinct, I know not what else, for I have no recollection of having acted deliberately, must have guided my motions in this terrible emergency.

From a semi-unconsciousness, during which my brain was in a whirl, as, indeed, was every thing else, I emerged to find that I had grasped the snake just behind the head, and was engaged in frantic endeavors to prevent the coils from inclosing my neck, for which advantage the reptile actually seemed to be striving.

The hold I had obtained would seem to have been sufficient to decide the contest at once, and in my favor.

So it would have, and for some little while I did think so myself, but I soon found that a desperate struggle lay before me, before I could even hope to conquer my powerful adversary.

Rattlesnakes will stand, or at least this one did, a tremendous quantity of choking. They are game to the last, strong almost beyond belief, and quicker than the lightning's flash in their movements.

And, besides all this, there was the mule. While I was fighting, and choking, and thrashing the snake about, Bob was snorting, plunging, kicking and crushing my leg into the very stones that lay in the creek's bottom.

Every time the snake in its manifold evolutions would touch the infernal beast, he

would begin anew, and keep it up until compelled to stop from sheer exhaustion.

Thus the battle raged, how long I can never tell, but it seemed to me for hours. Nor can I even ever so faintly portray the horrors of that struggle for life.

At times I would find my hand growing numb under the fearful strain; little by little the fingers would relax, and then again, as I caught sight of those terrible, blazing eyes, seemingly glaring into mine with a look of triumph, the grip would settle back again, and again would those never-ceasing evolutions flash about by my head.

But the end was coming.

I saw it suddenly grow dark, my heart seemed bursting its bonds, my breath came in quick, short gasps, a deadly sickness, nausea, was stealing upon me; my grasp was relaxing, when all at once the turning limp between my fingers, the snake had ceased to struggle. It was dead.

Hardly realizing that such was indeed the case, I raised upon my elbow and sought a solution of what then appeared almost a miracle.

But there was no mistaking the fact. The snake was no longer the formidable thing it had been a moment before. I held in my hand only the upper half of the body, the other lay some little distance away.

At a glance I saw the cause of this sudden change in my favor.

The snake, in its turnings and twistings, had thrown a fold within reach of the terrified mule, and he had bitten it in two.

THE PAWNEE SACRIFICE.

BY RALPH RINGWOOD.

ONCE while stationed at Fort Clark, on the upper Missouri, I chanced to stroll out to a grove near by, where a party of trappers had encamped, and found them, as usual, seated around their fire, supper being over, smoking and relating their varied experiences.

As I drew near, a place was readily made for me, and having seen me comfortably seated, they continued their conversation.

An old gray-headed hunter was talking, or, as it is expressed here, "had the floor."

"They (the Pawnees) ar' a bloodthirsty set, an' as treacherous as a copperhead. I never know'd one of 'em to do a thing that warn't out an' out mean, an' I do believe

"Arter thet, she lay kinder quiet, an' purty soon she war dead."

"But even then the devils warn't satisfied. They ontied what war left of the gal, an' then the whole lot, for all the world like a pack of hungry coyotes, fell aound her, an' cut her into pieces not bigger'n bullets."

"By this time I war so mad thet I didn't much keer what turned up, so I determined to hev one rip at 'em anyhow. Most of 'em hed got off in a hurry arter they had got their piece, an' so when I slid down the fur side of the tree an' got ready, ther warn't more'n half a dozen left, an' half of them war squaws. But the old head devil war thar, the big medicin', an' he war the one I picked out."

"He war still goin' on with his mumblin' an' sign-makin' an' the like, when I drewed a fine bead atween his snaky eyes, an' let the old piece go."

"He never knowed what hurt him, an' afore the others had done lookin' to see if he war plum' dead, I war half a mile off to whar thar was a crick in which I broke the trail."

"I got off by a tight squeeze an' a heap of hard runnin', but it warn't till next year thet I found out what it all meant—I mean the burnin' an' cuttin' the gal up."

"You see the Pawnees an' Sioux was at war, an' the Pawnees had captured the gal from the Sioux."

"Thet year the'r corn-crop was a failure, an' they hed sacrificed the prisoner to one of the'r gods who, they believed, looked especially arter the corn-fields."

THE AGE of man has long been a matter of dispute and has puzzled the learned savans for centuries, and as yet they have entirely failed to come to any thing like a definite conclusion, but I am glad to say that I have discovered traces that antedate the periods when man is supposed to have had his origin, which by most minds is not allowed to have been more than six thousand years ago. I was breakfasting at a country tavern when I made the discovery. I took a biscuit off a plate, and upon prying it apart, which I did with a deal of labor, I discovered traces of primeval man and woman in the shapes of a coat-button, a galows-buckle, and a hair-pin. Upon examining the different geological strata of the biscuit, I found that it was one of the earliest formations, and to have had its origin three thousand, four hundred and sixty-two years and some months before the making of the world itself, and it destroys the popular fallacies that have misled learned men for so long a time. The beings those articles represent I conjecture to have been similar to those of the present day, and with, probably, the same habits.

I have been so elated over this discovery that I have had no appetite since, but have refused to be knighted in the Order of the Garter and Shoe-string, and declined to allow the next new world to be named after me.

THERE is no woman so mean but that some other woman can be meaner.

ALL witnesses are not endowed with wit.

THE musician who dwelt upon a note lately moved off.

WHEN a man goes to a hotel to put up he puts his name down.

SOME men's virtues, like valuable jewels, are put away in secret places and never exposed.

THE following books should be in all farmers' libraries: the Corn Doctor, Life's Heydays, Plowing the Deep, Sowing the Wind, Benefits of Thrashing in Youth, and How to enrich the soil of the Heart.

THE undermined begs to announce to the million readers of the SATURDAY JOURNAL that he has opened a museum of curious curiosities, both natural and unnatural, comprising the following bill of fare:

One large appetite, chained; caught in the wild New Jersey meadows after a hard day's hunting.

One woman petrified with horror, from which she never recovered.

One cage of very bad colds and another of good colds.

One cage of cross lions, and another of cross-eyes.

Two bottles of violent headaches.

One beautiful set of wax-works—a young lady's teeth.

One extra-fledged, long-tailed bull-frog.

One tiger lily, very ferocious.

One kit of wise saws with savage teeth.

One honest man—a rare spectacle, worth alone the price of admission.

One mother who thinks her children are not much better than anybody's else.

One end of the world.

One jugful of happiness.

One small piece of nothing.

One paper of assorted difficulties.

Three loaves of bread in the bone.

One piece of the last chance.

One paper of sore-eyes and galls.

The fold to which all rogues may expect to be brought—the scaffold.

One bill of beans, down which we used to slide in winter.

One pair of full-blooded, well-broken, brimstone matches.

A bunch of aromatic leaves from memory.

One cage-full of long-eared toothaches.

A hole made by a cannon-ball in a wall during the siege of Paris.

A handful of goose-quills from the wings of imagination.

And innumerable something elses.

WHAT is the difference between two beans which are similarly dissimilar?

How many eggs are there in a broken dozen?

How long is a piece of red string?

WHAT is the exact difference between nothing and something?

If you are troubled with too much sleepiness, the best thing you can do is to take a walk by your girl's house and see her keeping company with your rival. This is a sure cure one hundred times out of ninety-nine.

BLESSED are the poor authors that die without making a noise in the world. Yea, saith the critic, for they rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.

BEAT TIME.